UPSIDONIA

ARCHIBALD MARSHALL

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Author of
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"Roding Rectory,"
"Rank & Riches," etc.

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To the Three
Comic Characters,
K, M, & N.

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UPSIDONIA

CHAPTER I

I HAD been walking for many days, carrying my pack, enjoying myself hugely and spending next to nothing. I had got into a wild hilly country, where habitation was very sparse, and had walked for hours that morning along a rough road without meeting a single human being.

In the middle of the day I came to a moorside hamlet, where I got something of a meal, and set out again almost immediately, meaning to find some place where I could enjoy an hour's sleep. For it was very hot, and I had already walked over twenty miles.

But as I left the village, I was joined by a gentleman of obliging manners but somewhat unkempt appearance, who invited me to turn aside and visit the old jet caves, which had once been famous in this locality, though long since disused.

For anything but a cave, I should have done my best to shake him off, but I have a great love of caves, especially of those which go

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mysteriously back into the bowels of the earth, and no one knows their ending. They are full of romance, and call up all sorts of delightful visions. From Eastern tales of magic and treasure to brisk tales of smugglers, the entrance to a cave has always been the entrance to regions of mystery, in which anything may happen. So I immediately accepted the invitation to visit these caves, which were only a few hundred yards away from the main road.

At first sight they were a trifle disappointing. There were three of them, at the foot of a high bank of shale, almost hidden by trees and shrubs. The shale had nearly closed the entrances, and one looked over a bank of it, which left a hole hardly more than big enough to creep through. Still, they were undoubtedly caves, and not mere holes in the hillside. The largest one was full of water, and little ferns grew luxuriantly on the sides and roof, which dripped continuously. One of the others was choked by a fall of earth a little way from the entrance, and my guide told me that this had happened quite recently, after a very wet spell. The third was comparatively dry, and he said that he had himself penetrated more than a mile into it, with no signs of its ending.

Whether this was true or not, I could not resist trying it. I had an electric torch, fully

charged, in my pack, and it was a great chance to have a cave to explore with it. My friend demurred a little at accompanying me. He said that if the other cave had fallen in, after so many years, this one was not unlikely to fall in now at any time, and we should find ourselves in an awkward fix if it should fall in while we were exploring, and cut off our retreat. I had no wish for his company, and did not press him; but when I got out the torch, and flashed it, he thought he would come after all. I think he had at heart the same sort of feeling about caves and electric torches that I had.

We got over the mound on to the muddy floor of the cave. The roof was high enough to enable us to walk upright, and we went forward singly, straight ahead into the darkness.

We had got in perhaps thirty or forty yards, and I had just switched on the torch, when a stone or something fell in front of us with a noisy plump. My companion clutched me by the arm. "I believe there's going to be a fall," he said.

I shook him off and continued, and again something fell, that made still more noise. "Come back!" he shouted. "Come back!"

I turned round to see him running towards the patch of sunlight, and then there was a

load roar in my ears, which, however, instantly became dead silence.

For a moment I was confused, but went on, forgetting all about my late companion. When I turned round again he had disappeared, and the patch of sunlight also. So I continued on my way, and seemed to be always mounting upwards, with the ground quite dry, and the roof of the cave still some way above my head.

I had certainly now walked a mile when, to my surprise, I saw a point of light in front of me, which increased as I approached it, and presently showed itself as a wide opening.

I came out into a place much like that at which I had entered, except that it was still more masked by shrubs, and found myself in the clearing of a wood. It seemed to me that I had come quite straight along the underground passage, so that I must be on the way in which I intended to go. The cave, as a cave, had been disappointing, and there was nothing to be gained by going back. I would take my nap, and then find the road again.

I looked about for a place to lie down in, and as I did so saw a very ragged dirty man coming towards me.

I was rather annoyed at this. Having shaken off one uninvited companion, I did not want to be troubled with another.

There was something rather striking about his face, in spite of his unkempt hair and beard —a look of self-possession, even of pride, and, as he kept his eyes on me approaching him, almost of arrogance.

However, he was poor enough, to all appearances, and I thought that if I gave him some money he would probably want to go away at once and spend it. So I accosted him cheerfully and offered him a sixpence.

I had made no mistake about his arrogance. He drew himself up, and his eyes flashed at me.

"How dare you?" he began. "I will——"; and he looked round as if to summon someone to aid him in resenting an insult.

"Oh, all right," I said, pocketing the coin; "if you are as proud as all that——! But I meant no harm, and I'm almost as poor as you are."

"The more shame to you for behaving like that," he said hotly. "I could forgive it, perhaps, in one who was richer. I will not take your money; and if you use your superior strength to force it on me, I warn you that you will not hear the last of it."

I felt sorry for the poor creature. I took the sixpence out of my pocket again, and held it out to him."

"Come now, take it," I said. "Go and get yourself a good meal, or a drink if you like. You look as if it wouldn't do you any harm."

He was still more enraged. "You impudent scoundrel!" he cried. "I'll have you arrested for this." And he stalked off with his head in the air, wrapping his rags around him.

He looked such an absurd figure that I sent an involuntary laugh after him, which caused him to turn round and shake his fist at me. I had not meant him to hear, for I was sorry for him; but I reflected before I had chosen my mossy resting-place under a spreading oak, that with so great a contempt for money and what money represented in the way of bodily comfort, he was not so much in want of pity as he seemed to be. Then I took off my knapsack, and pillowing my head upon it was soon in a deep sleep.

As, after a long time, I began to regain consciousness, I became aware of a touch on my body about the region of my waist. It could only have been a second or two before the actuality disengaged itself from the stuff of my dreams, and I suddenly awoke, and sprang up into a sitting posture, to see a figure disappearing among the trees. Feeling in my waistcoat pocket, I found that my watch had disappeared.

I jumped up, and seizing my knapsack in

one hand and my stout walking stick in the other, gave chase.

I had not very far to go. When I got round the tree behind which the thief had disappeared, I saw to my surprise that he was an elderly, if not an old man, dressed in a frock coat and a tall hat. He was stout, and appeared to be grossly fed, for as I came up to him he turned and put up his hands to warn me off—my watch was in one of them ; but he was so winded by his few yards' run that he was not able to speak. In his mouth was a large and expensive-smelling cigar, and he formed the oddest figure of a watch-snatcher that could well be imagined.

I seized my watch out of his hand, and he found breath enough to bleat out: "What are you doing? They're after you. Give me all your money quickly, before they come."

"You old rascal!" I cried, and was going on to give him a piece of my mind, when my attention was distracted by a hullabaloo from the road, which was only a few yards off, and from which we could be plainly seen.

"There's the rascal! That's him!" I heard shouted, and saw a considerable concourse of people advancing towards me, headed by a policeman, and the ragged man to whom I had tendered the coin.

The presence of a policeman in that, as I had

thought, lonely spot, was a better piece of fortune than I could have hoped for. "Yes, here he is," I said. "He stole my watch while I was asleep, and ran off with it. Constable, I give him in charge."

The policeman had leapt the ditch which divided the wood from the road, and now came straight towards me with a look of determination on his face.

"Take him!" shouted the ragged man; and, to my utter astonishment, he seized me by the collar, and said: "Now you come along with me quietly, or it will be the worse for you."

I shook him off roughly. I was young and strong, and he was neither.

"What are you doing?" I asked angrily. "Here's the thief! Take hold of him."

The fat man turned away with a shrug of the shoulders. "I wash my hands of it," he said. "You can do what you like with him."

I was so infuriated with his impudence that I made a dash for him. But the policeman was on me again, and with him several others from the crowd. In spite of my struggles I was soon overpowered.

"Are you all mad?" I cried. "There's the thief! Why don't you take him? I've done nothing."

They paid not the slightest attention to my

protestations. The ragged man had taken no part in my capture, but stood aside, and directed the others with an air of authority. This was the more remarkable, because the greater part of them were not like the ordinary crowd that follows the police on an errand of duty, but were well-dressed, and had all the air of being well-to-do or even rich.

I appealed to them. "Do give a fellow a chance," I said. "I'm on a walking-tour, and I dare say I look like a tramp. But I'm quite respectable."

They cut me short by dragging me towards the road, where a smart Victoria was standing, at a point towards which other carriages were now driving.

The policeman said: "You're charged with trying to force money on this gentleman; and I warn you that anything you now say will be used in evidence against you."

I saw it was no use protesting further. I was either asleep and dreaming, in which case I should presently awake; or I was in the hands of a set of lunatics, and must wait until I got again into the company of sensible men.

But it annoyed me to see the smug old thief retiring with all the honours of war, while I was being led off in ignominious captivity. He was actually now stepping into the Victoria, and

the cockaded coachman on the box was touching his hat to him.

"I warn you that you will be sorry for this," I said to my captors. "But, at any rate, take that man too. I tell you that he stole my watch, and wanted to take all my money before you came up."

They took no notice of this appeal, except that one of two ill-dressed men amongst the well-dressed ones said to the other: "Old Perry is really rather overdoing it. He'll be had up for tampering with justice if he's not careful."

"Then why don't you get him taken up now?" I asked.

But they looked at me coldly and turned away.

"Mr. Perry," said the ragged man, "this is a dangerous criminal. Will you let the constable drive him to the police station, and walk back with us?"

The old humbug of whom this remarkable request was made turned up a sanctimonious face, and replied: "I am in my proper place amongst the low and degraded. Let the prisoner drive with me."

There were murmurs of astonishment at this, and one of the poor-looking men said to my ragged one: "Oh, let him alone! He'll get tired of it by and by."

I was then ordered into the carriage, and we drove off at a foot's pace, the other carriages turning back to accompany us, and the crowd walking behind and on either side.

I was surprised to see that the country was very different from what I had imagined it to be when I had come through the cave. Before that, as I have said, there had been few signs of human habitation; but now I had suddenly come into a populous country-side, and seemed to be not far from a town of some size.

For we were passing large houses in large gardens, villas, and cottages; and the road, which had been of the roughest, was wide and smooth, and there was a good deal of traffic on it.

I could not make out in the least where I had come to. I had known that I could not be many miles off the village of Eppington, but could think of no considerable town within a radius of fifty miles of where I had spent the night; and I knew I could not have walked that distance. I might have put a question to my companion; but I was so annoyed that I could not bring myself to address him.

It was he who first addressed me. He was still ostentatiously smoking his rich cigar, and looked at me out of a bilious, but impudently benevolent eye, and said: "Young man, I

would have saved you if I could. I think you must now be convinced of that. It may be that in the exercise of my charity I have overstepped the mark, and have done wrong. It now only remains for you to show your gratitude by keeping what has passed to yourself. If a charge is brought against me, I look to you to shield my good name, or my sphere of influence may be much diminished."

My reply to this preposterous piece of cant was a somewhat violent assurance that I should see that he got the punishment he deserved. He held up his fat hands in pained astonishment, and thereafter kept silence.

CHAPTER II

By and by we came to a tramway terminus, where an electric car was standing. The policeman, who had been walking by the side of the carriage, the ragged man, and many of our other followers, jumped on to it. The fat rascal in whose carriage I was seated ordered the coachman to drive on faster, and I was not sorry to be relieved of most of our escort. But the other carriages, of which there were perhaps half a dozen, and some of them very splendid equipages indeed, continued with us, and my appearance was still rather more public than I could have wished.

We presently passed into a busy street of shops. I could not for the life of me imagine what town it was that I had come to. It was evidently a place of considerable importance and a large population, which crowded the streets, and frequently jeered at our little procession.

Everything around me seemed usual. The shops and buildings were like those of any other large town, and the people much the same—a mixture of old and young, rich and poor.

But there was just one thing that struck me as a little strange. The poor people—even the very poorest, like the man at whose hands I had been so remarkably arrested—walked amongst the rest with an air far more assured than was customary; and the well-dressed people seemed to have rather a hang-dog sort of look. I might not have noticed this but for the predicament in which I found myself; but my attention being fixed upon the point it was impossible to ignore it.

We drew up at the door of a police station, and I was taken inside, where I lost no time in making a somewhat violent protest to the sergeant in charge, and again invited him to take the preposterous Mr. Perry into custody.

As before, not the smallest notice was taken of my indignant speech. I was told sharply to hold my tongue, and the charge against me was repeated in the same ridiculous form in which it had first been made, and entered in the sergeant's ledger. The ragged man appeared before the formalities were concluded, and, to my now painful bewilderment, was treated with marked respect by the police, whom he addressed with calm authority. His name was entered as my accuser, and, upon the charge being read over to me, I discovered him to be "Lord Potter."

Well, if he was really a nobleman in disguise, that perhaps accounted for the absurd subserviency with which he was treated. But the disguise was so complete that my indignation was redoubled, and I made one more very strong protest before I was led away.

"What place is this?" I asked, when I saw that no more notice was going to be taken of my protest than before.

Lord Potter stared at me with high disdain on his dirty face, and Mr. Perry with a most irritating air of grieved sympathy.

"Perhaps," I said, "I can find someone I know, who will come to my assistance. I don't know in the least what town I am in."

"Come along," said the constable who had arrested me. "You'll only make it worse by being impudent. You know well enough what place you're in. Now are you coming quietly, or shall I have to take you?"

I thought it best to go quietly. I was taken through a door opposite to the one by which we had entered, and rather to my surprise found myself in a carpeted passage. We passed several other doors on either side, until we came to one which the policeman unlocked.

"By the look of your clothes," he said, as he fumbled with the key, "you ought to be better treated; but we're pretty full up, and

you'll only be here till to-morrow morning. You must make the best of it. Here, take this."

He pushed half-a-crown into my hand, and me through the door, which he immediately shut and locked after me, leaving me for the first time in my life in a prison cell.

My surprise, at the extraordinary action of a policeman in pressing a tip upon a prisoner, was overcome by the fierce anger I felt at being locked up in a pitch dark cell, which could not have been more than five or six feet square; for as I put out my hands I found I could touch the walls on all sides. What mad piece of inhumanity was this, to add to the burlesque charge on which I was to be tried? There was not even a stool to sit down on. Was I really to be confined in this dark hole until I could be taken before a magistrate on the following morning? I turned, and banged and kicked on the door in uncontrollable rage, and shouted at the top of my voice.

But there was no answer, and presently I desisted, determined to make the best of my situation.

I began to feel round the walls, and immediately came to a little obstacle, which with an immense lift of relief I recognized as an electric switch. I turned it, and the place was flooded

with light. Then I discovered that I was not in a cell at all, but in a little lobby, in all four walls of which were doors.

I opened one, and found a deep cupboard, with hooks in it, but nothing else. I shut it and opened the next, and found myself on the threshold of a small but comfortably furnished parlour.

Opposite to the door was a window looking on to a strip of garden gay with flowers; but the window, which was of ordinary size, was guarded by thick iron bars. It was this fact that brought it home to me that, incredible as it might appear, this room, with a comfortable armchair by the window, with books on a shelf, and pictures on the prettily papered walls, was my prison-cell, and not the narrow lobby into which I had first come.

The third door in the lobby led into a well-appointed bathroom, and leading out of the parlour was a little bedroom, with the sheets turned down on the bed, and a suit of pink pyjamas laid out all ready for its occupant.

It may be imagined that all this, following on what had already happened, puzzled me not a little; but since this convenient little self-contained flat was mine to make myself at home in until the following morning, I could, at any rate, take advantage of its amenities.

I was dusty and footsore, and very glad of a hot bath. As I lay steaming in it, I recalled the words of the policeman, before he had pressed the half-crown into my hand and shut me into the lobby: "By the look of your clothes you ought to be better treated."

Well, as for my clothes, they had certainly been made by a good tailor, but they were of well-nigh immemorial age, and were covered with dust and travel-stains. I wore also an aged green hat of soft felt, and a flannel shirt with a low collar and a whisp of an old tie; and my boots, white with dust, were an easy but unlovely pair that I kept for these expeditions. No, my clothes could not possibly have indicated any exalted station in life, nor even the moderate degree of gentility that was mine by birth and education. The man must have been sneering at me.

But then, what could he have meant by referring to better treatment? I was lodged like a coronation guest. Was it the habit of the authorities of this extraordinary town, whose identity puzzled me more and more, to house their prisoners like potentates, since my quarters were considered only fit to be apologized for? I could only give up the problem, and wait for what should happen next.

When I had had my bath, brushed the dust

off my clothes, and put on a clean shirt and clean socks out of my pack, I began to feel hungry; and such was the effect upon me of my surroundings that I looked around me, almost without intention, for a bell. There was one by the mantelpiece, which I rang, and then waited with some curiosity for what should happen.

Within a very short time I heard the outer door being opened, and there came into the room a waiter with a napkin over his shoulder. Except that his clothes were seedy, and his shirt front rather crumpled, he had the appearance of a servant at a would-be smart restaurant, ready to do what was wanted of him, but having no very high opinion of the person from whom he received his orders. However, he seemed to have anticipated my wants, for without a word he held out to me a bill of fare, and I accepted it with equal unconcern and looked over it.

It was of a fairly elaborate description, and as a precautionary measure, before making any selection, I said: "I suppose I don't have to pay for any of this?"

His lip curled as he replied: "Of course not. Choose whatever you like and put a tick against it."

Thus encouraged, I ordered a nice little dinner

of clear soup, *truite-au-bleu*, lamb cutlets with new potatoes, a slice of ham with madeira sauce and spinach, a *pêche Melba*, angels on horseback, and some strawberries to finish up with. He took the order without flinching, and asked: "Do you want any wine?"

"Well, yes," I said, "if there's nothing to pay for it."

He flushed angrily. I don't want any of your impudence," he said. "You will pay nothing at all for anything you have as long as you are here, and if you are not very careful you will be here a good deal longer than you bargain for."

"I don't know that I should altogether object to that," I said, and took the wine list from him.

It was an excellent list, and under the circumstances I made excellent use of it. I allowed myself a glass of white Tokay, and another of Chateau d'Yquem, a pint of Pommery, 1900, and a bottle of '68 port to sit with later on. He looked more contemptuous than ever as he took the order, and asked disdainfully: "Don't you want a liqueur with your coffee?"

"I had forgotten that for the moment," I said. "Have you any very old brandy?"

"We have some eighteen-fifteen," he said; "but I need scarcely say we are very seldom asked for it."

"Well, on the terms that you have indicated, you are asked for it now," I said. "And I should like one or two really good cigars, fairly strong—something like the one that Mr. Perry was smoking this afternoon, if you can get them."

He went out of the room without a word, and carefully locked the outer door behind him. However inexplicable my treatment, I was not, at any rate, to forget that I was a prisoner.

Tired with my long walk, and the somewhat disturbing experiences I had been through, I fell fast asleep in the easy chair by the open window, through which came sweet wafts from a patch of night-scented stock in the garden outside.

I only awoke when the waiter brought in the first course of my dinner. He had laid the table without disturbing me, and had put a vase of roses in the middle and four tall candles at the corners, with rose-coloured shades.

"I'm sorry I haven't brought my evening clothes," I said, as I took my seat.

He made no reply to this pleasantry, and his air of high superiority began to annoy me.

"Do you generally wait upon prisoners in this way?" I asked him, when he brought in the fish.

"We do in the case of prisoners who look like gentlemen and behave like pigs," was his surprising reply, which I turned over in my mind before I said: "This seems a topsy-turvy place altogether, but I should really like to know how I have behaved like a pig."

"You can wallow in your hoggishness as much as you like," he said acidly, "but if you have the impudence to address any more remarks to me, I'll punch your head for you."

I looked round at him, standing attentively behind my chair. He was a frail man, and looked hungry.

"You might find that two could play at that game," I said, with my eye on him; and he flushed, but did not flinch.

"Is that a threat?" he asked. "Because if it is——;" and he turned as if to leave the room.

As I didn't know what, in the general reversal of things, might be the punishment here for threatening to retaliate on a waiter who proposed to punch one's head, and I wanted to finish my dinner, I said: "If you're disinclined for conversation you can have your own way."

We went through the rest of the *ménu* in silence, I enjoying the good things provided for me, and he serving me with the readiest attention to the matter in hand. We did not

address another word to each other until he had carefully poured out from its basket-cradle a glass of the wonderful port.

I sipped it, and thought it just in the very least touched, and told him so. He took the glass, sniffed at the wine, and tasted it. "It's absolutely right," he said, "but of course you can have another bottle if you like."

"Thank you," I said, and began to wonder, rather uneasily, as he was away fetching it, if in some way I was not to pay pretty dearly for the remarkable treatment I was undergoing.

The second bottle of port was beyond criticism. When I had expressed my approval, the waiter put it on a little table by the side of the extremely easy chair, and indicated, but without saying so, that he wished to clear away. This he did, in complete silence; but before he finally left the room came over to where I was standing, and, holding out half a sovereign, said, still with the same inflection of contempt: "That's for yourself."

I took the coin in my hand, and said, somewhat after the manner of a cabman who has been offered twopence for a *pour boire:* "What do you call this?"

He flushed again, took it back, gave me half-a-crown instead, and then left the room.

My evening in prison had so far brought me a

dinner such as I seldom enjoyed, and five shillings in money. Why, but for my last question, it would have brought me seven and sixpence more, I was quite unable to imagine.

CHAPTER III

The cigars provided for me, if not of the exact brand as those smoked by Mr. Perry, were very good, and I had been enjoying one of them for some little time when I heard the outside door again being unlocked.

"Now," I thought, "I may get some explanation of this extraordinary state of affairs, and may possibly find myself wishing that my entertainment had not cost the ratepayers of this town quite so much money."

But I was in a state of such complete bodily satisfaction that I did not much care what should happen, and sat still until the door of my room was opened and a young man dressed in evening clothes came in.

He seemed to be under the influence of some agitation, and as the reek of my cigar met his nostrils, and his eyes fell upon my bottle of port resting in its cradle, his jaw dropped.

He raised his eyes to mine, and said: "I have come to make an appeal to you, sir."

"Well, sit down and make it," I said, indicating a chair. "Will you have a glass of wine—I can recommend it—or a cigar?"

He looked at me sternly. "I have brought myself to come and ask a favour of you," he said. "You look like a gentleman; you can at least try to behave as such."

I was in that comfortable state in which the idiosyncrasies of other people occasion one more amusement than surprise. I was also a little inclined to loquacity. I smiled at him.

"I don't pretend to understand you," I said; "but I am glad you think I look like a gentleman. I am one. My great-grandfather ruined himself at Crockford's, and although one of my great-uncles set up a shop, he never sold anything, and died poor. I am poor myself, but none the less deserving."

His face brightened a little. "I *thought* you were a gentleman," he said, "in spite of your behaviour. So am I, and of course my father too, although you might not think it from our appearance. Possibly you are engaged in the same good work as we are."

"I am not engaged in any good work at present," I said, "except that of making myself as comfortable as circumstances will permit. As for you, I think you look very gentlemanlike; I don't think I have had the pleasure of meeting your father."

"He is Mr. Perry," he said, "who tried his

utmost to save you from the results of your jest —I don't believe it meant more than that— with Lord Potter. As far as my father was concerned it was an unfortunate jest; and I might say the same as far as you are concerned, to judge from your present serious situation. In spite of his noble and self-sacrificing life, my father is misunderstood by a good many people; and Lord Potter, for one, would like to see his career of usefulness stopped. Now he has a handle against him. He is to be called as a witness when you come up before the magistrate to-morrow morning; and it rests with you whether that kind and good old man, whose life is a lesson to us all, shall be arrested himself and suffer the disgrace of a criminal trial. Surely you cannot be so lost to all sense of gratitude as to bring that about!"

I did not know in the least what he was talking about. His ideas seemed to be as topsy turvy as those of the rest of the people I had so far met in this curious place. But I was in too lazy a mood to make much effort to get at the bottom of all that was puzzling me.

"I should hate to get your father into trouble," I said. "I don't understand why a prosperous-looking elderly gentleman should pinch my watch and demand all my cash; but I dare say he did it all for the best, and as he

didn't get anything, I am prepared to be lenient with him. I'll do what I can."

He thanked me profusely. "You have only to stand on your dignity and refuse to answer questions, and they can prove nothing against him," he said.

"All right! Anything to oblige. You might tell me what all this means, though; and to begin with, what town this is; for I haven't the slightest idea where I am."

At this quite ordinary question, he seemed to be even more puzzled than I was. "I can't understand you," he said, and it was plain by the expression on his face that he spoke the truth. "Where do you come from?"

"I come from a little place called London," I said. "I don't know whether you have ever heard of it."

"No, never," he replied. "What part of the country is it in?"

"Do you ever happen to have heard of England?" I asked; and again he said: "No, never."

"Well, what country are we in now?" I asked, willing to humour him.

"Why, in Upsidonia, of course."

"In what?"

"Upsidonia. Look here, I'm not what I seem to be. Surely you can tell that from the

way I speak! Stop trying to play with me, and explain yourself."

"Tell me first what town this is."

"Culbut."

He said it in much the same tone as I might have answered "Manchester" or "Birmingham," to anyone who should have asked me the same question in either of those cities—with a look of surprise and enquiry.

"Oh, Culbut!" I said. "Yes, of course. And Culbut is in Upsidonia. I see. Well, in London, England, where I come from, they don't lock a person up for offering sixpence to a tramp, even when the tramp turns out to be a lord; and if they do lock them up, it isn't in a place like this."

He looked round the cosy little room with some disgust.

"It is disgraceful," he said. "My father ought to know about it. I didn't know there were any such places left. You've a perfect right to make trouble about this. It is a clear case for the Prisoners' Aid Society, and I'm sure, if you act properly, as you promised to, for my father, he will take up the case."

"Thanks very much," I said. "I have no particular complaint to make. The manners and customs of—what's the name of the place? —Culbut—are different from those I've been

accustomed to, but they don't seem to be entirely objectionable. Can you tell me what they will do, by the by, supposing I am found guilty of the charge brought against me—whatever it is—to-morrow ? "

" Oh, we'll try and get you off. Your appearance is in your favour."

" Thank you. But tell me what they will do if I *am* found guilty."

" Well, there has been a good deal of it lately, and the police are determined to stamp it out. And Potter is rather high game to fly at, you must admit. He is determined to get you a month, which is the limit without bodily assault."

" Oh, a month ! " I said, somewhat taken aback. " With hard labour ? "

" I think we ought to be able to manage that. We'll try our best."

" That is very good of you indeed ; but I shouldn't like you to put yourselves out at all."

" I'll tell you what," he said, with a laugh, " we will tell them that in the country you come from it isn't a crime to give your money away. Could you remember to stick to that story ? "

" I dare say I might," I said, " if I tie a knot in my handkerchief. By the way, isn't it a crime here to take money from people, and watches, and so on ? "

"A crime! Of course not. We should call that philanthropy."

"Oh, I see. Then your father is a philanthropist."

"Of course he is; one of the best known in Culbut. You don't really suppose he is the rich man he appears to be, do you?"

"I should have thought he might be fairly well off, if he has been practising philanthropy for any length of time."

"For a life-time," he said, reverentially. "I will tell you my father's story."

"Do!" I encouraged him. "I should like to hear it."

I lit another cigar. He cleared his throat and began.

CHAPTER IV

"OUR family," said young Perry, "has held a good position in Culbut for many generations. My great-grandfather is said to have come here as a boy with ten thousand pounds in his pocket; but by diligence and sobriety he managed to get rid of nearly all of it while he was still a young man."

"How did he do it?" I asked.

"He got into the warehouse of a poor cloth-merchant. He stuck to his work night and day, and lost his employers so much money, that they took him into partnership when he was only twenty-one. Then he redoubled his efforts, bought in the dearest markets and sold in the cheapest, and decreased the trade of the firm by leaps and bounds. He married his master's daughter, and she brought him a considerable number of debts. Before he was thirty he had retired from business a very poor man, and spent the rest of his life serving his fellow citizens. He was Lord Mayor of Culbut three times, and was offered a baronetcy, which he refused.

"My great-grandfather and my grandfather were both poor men, and my father was brought

up in the lap of indigence. But when he was quite a boy, he saw a sight that affected his whole life.

"He was walking along the poor street in which he lived, when he saw a carriage with four horses and postillions coming along. In it was seated a miserably rich-looking old man swathed in furs, who was being taken off to prison. My father hung on to the back of the carriage—he was but a child—and was carried inside the prison gates. There he saw the treatment that was then considered good enough for rich malefactors. They drove through a large garden to a fine-looking house, and when the carriage stopped at the door a groom of the chambers came out, followed by two footmen in powdered wigs and silk stockings. The wretched creature was taken inside, and before he went away my father learnt that he would be treated with every refinement of luxury. And what do you think his crime was?"

"I haven't the least idea," I replied. "Probably making somebody a present of a fortune."

"No. His crime was that he had thrown a pot of caviare into a provision shop."

"And you're not allowed to do that here?"

"You must remember that he was an old man, in the last stages of opulence, and actually surfeited with food. As my father went back to

his happy home, which had always lacked all but the barest necessities of life, the contrast between his lot and that of this unfortunate creature, bred from his earliest years to the burdens of wealth, took strong hold of his youthful imagination. Then and there he vowed his life to the service of the unhappy rich, and especially to the alleviation of the lot of prisoners; and nothing ever turned him from his purpose. When he grew up, he left home, much against the wishes of his parents, and went to live in one of the richest parts of the town, so as to get to know the wealthy thoroughly, and to be able to help them when the time came for him to do so. He even took their money, and, so far as a man of education could, became like them. Of course, there are many who follow in his footsteps now, but most of them live in settlements, and only come into actual contact with the people they are trying to help by going in and out amongst them in their own homes. But he was the first; and he really lived with them, in a house with twenty bedrooms, luxuriously furnished, and with a *chef* and a great many servants. I believe he did actually nothing for himself for two whole years, and, of course, he broke down under the strain."

"Poor fellow!" I murmured sympathetically.

" He went back for a time to the life of poverty in which he had been brought up. But even then, he refused to live like the rest of his family, and, as far as his enfeebled state of health would permit, practised secret indulgences, and never lost sight of his great purpose in life.

" He made a convert of my mother, who was the daughter of a farm-labourer, and of one of the proudest and poorest families in Upsidonia. They started their married life in a comfortable villa, with four indoor servants and two out—my father could not, of course, expect his young wife to take the extreme plunge that he had himself—and he has told me that she acted like a heroine, and never grumbled at the life of strict affluence they laid down for themselves. I was born in that house, and it was my mother's own wish that we then moved to a larger one, where we have lived ever since. We have all been brought up to think nothing of wealth, and each of us in our several ways does his or her utmost to help our parents in their noble work. My eldest sister has even married a stockbroker, and a very good fellow he is, and it is wonderful how he has overcome the defects of his upbringing.

" Well, I have been talking for a long time; but I wanted to show you how dreadful it would be if a man like my father should suffer dis-

grace for committing an error which only arose from his eager desire to serve one whom he saw to be in an unfortunate position."

"Oh, you need not fear anything of that sort after what you have told me," I assured him. "I would rather go to prison myself—even such a prison as I am in now—than that he should."

"It is very good of you indeed to say so," he said gratefully. "But you need have no fear of this sort of prison. My father would exert his influence to have you sent to Pankhurst, where, chiefly by his efforts, everything is as it should be, and a real attempt is made to raise prisoners. Even in the first division, you would be permitted to do something useful, such as breaking stones, and you would not be expected to eat more than two meals a day, and those quite meagre ones."

"Well, to tell you the truth," I said, "one of my hobbies is to study conditions of prison life in the various countries I visit. I am very glad to have had the opportunity of judging for myself in this way, and though I don't want to go to prison myself any longer, if it can be avoided, you would be conferring a real benefit upon me if you could get me sent to the most luxurious penal establishment you possess, supposing I am found guilty."

"Do you really mean that?" he asked.

"Yes, I really do. I know it must seem odd to you, but I am like that."

He rose and shook hands with me. "I can't tell you how I admire your spirit," he said.

I drank half a glass of port and rose to still greater heights of self-abnegation. I was anxious to show myself worthy of his praise. "As long as I remain in Upsidonia," I said, "I should like to live entirely amongst the very rich, and just as if I were rich myself. Could you manage that for me, do you think, in return for what I am going to do for your father?"

He laughed. "If you really mean it," he said, "there won't be the slightest difficulty. And we are the right people to help you. They might not show themselves as they really are to a stranger, for they stick to one another wonderfully, and the more respectable among them hide their riches as much as possible. Some of the tragedies of wealth one comes across are heart-breaking. But I mustn't begin on that subject, or I should never end. If you can see your way to relieving a few of the rich in Culbut of a little of their load of misery, you will be doing a great work."

"I shall quite hope to be able to do that," I said. "I might be able to take away a considerable sum of money."

Again he shook hands with me, but his emotion

did not permit of much speech. "You will have your reward," he said simply.

"I quite hope so," I replied. "What, must you be going? Are you sure you won't take —I mean are you sure you are quite wrapped up enough? The night air is a little chilly."

"Thank you, I shall walk home," he said. "Well, I am very much obliged to you for what you have promised to do. We shan't forget it, and anything we can do for you in return, as long as you remain in Upsidonia, you may be sure we *shall* do."

CHAPTER V

THEY seemed to keep early hours in Upsidonia.* A cup of tea was brought to me at half-past seven, and I was told that I must breakfast not later than a quarter-past eight, for the court sat at nine.

It was not unlike what a police court in London might have been, but the magistrate sat in his shirt-sleeves, for it was a hot day, and wore corduroy trousers. There was a crowd of well-dressed loafers at the back of the court, and amongst them some richly attired women. Lord Potter, looking as if he had not washed or taken off his clothes since the day before, occupied a seat on the bench. Mr. Perry and his son were in the well of the court.

I gave my name, which I had withheld the night before, as John Howard, but refused to say where I came from or what my occupation was. Apparently, this was not unusual, for I was not pressed in any way.*

The policeman who had arrested me deposed that from information received he had proceeded to a certain place and taken me

* See Notes.

into custody, not without difficulty, for I had shown violence and had tried to get him to arrest another person instead.

Asked whether he saw that person in that court, he indicated Mr. Perry, who looked very uncomfortable, and I said at once: "That was all a mistake, your worship. I had been fast asleep, and hardly knew what I was doing. I mistook that gentleman for somebody else."

My interruption rather scandalised the court, but I managed to get it out before I was stopped, and I could see that the magistrate was relieved at my having spoken.

"There is no charge against our respected fellow-townsman," he said, bowing towards Mr. Perry; and there were murmurs of approbation from the back of the court.

Lord Potter looked black. "The prisoner accused him of taking away his watch," he said, "and trying to get his money. Of course, if nothing had been found on the prisoner the charge would have fallen through. It is quite evident that Mr. Perry wanted to make it appear that I was lying when I said that this man had tried to press money on me."*

He spoke with great indignation, but the magistrate said firmly: "There is no charge

* See Note.

against Mr. Perry," and added: "He could not have taken away the prisoner's watch, because it was found on him when he came to the police-station, and his money too. He would hardly have taken it back, if someone had been kind enough to relieve him of it, would he?"

This was said with a smile to Lord Potter, who grunted angrily, but said no more until he was asked to tell his story, which he did quite truthfully, except that he gave the impression of my having acted violently towards him, and pressed money on him with threats.

Then I was asked if I had anything to say in my defence.

I said that the whole episode had been an ill-timed joke, which I now much regretted. I cross-examined Lord Potter as to his implication of violence, and made him admit that I had used none, and threatened none.

"And didn't I tell you I was almost as poor as you were?" I asked.

This he also admitted. I treated him with somewhat exaggerated respect, and ended up by saying that I acknowledged it was a foolish prank to play on a man of his eminence, and that, whatever the result of the charge, I begged to apologise for it. This softened him a little, though not much, but when the

magistrate and his clerk had conferred with him in whispers, he seemed to give way, and the magistrate then turned to me and addressed me thus:

"John Howard, although you have refused to give any information about yourself, it is evident from your general appearance that you are a young man of good if not exalted station. But you must not go away with the impression that there is one law for the poor and another for the rich here. It is not on account of your appearance of poverty that I shall deal leniently with you. I believe that you have committed this gross offence against a distinguished man out of mere youthful folly and bravado, and you may consider yourself fortunate that I have decided not to send you to prison for it. You have been confined for the night in surroundings that have probably caused you considerable distress, and I have taken that into account. I shall fine you ten pounds, with the option of a month's imprisonment, and let this be a lesson to you to leave off playing practical jokes that are likely to bring you within the reach of the law. Next case."

I left the dock in some perturbation, for I had not got ten pounds on me. But I was immediately led to the clerk's table, and he

said in a business-like way : " Sign that, please," and handed me a little pile of sovereigns and a form of receipt.

I signed the receipt and put the money into my pocket, and was now free. Mr. Perry and his son joined me, and wringing me warmly by the hand led me out into the open air. They were both dressed in shabby suits, I suppose out of respect to the court, and, although the young man did not look any the worse, I thought that his father seemed more of an oily old humbug than before.

But there seemed to be no doubt about the reality of his gratitude to me, and his son was equally cordial. They both pressed me to come at once to their house, and to stay as long as I could.

" If you can put up with our way of living," said Mr. Perry, " which is the reverse of simple, we shall be very pleased indeed to have you so long as you care to stay. Or, if you are afraid of luxury, as so many young men are nowadays, we could recommend you to an hotel where you could be as uncomfortable as you please, and we will still do all we can to help you in your social studies, which, I am glad to hear from my son, you are anxious to pursue."

" If you will be good enough to put me up," I said, " nothing could suit me better ; and as

for luxury, I assure you I shan't grumble at anything. As I told your son, I should like to pass as a rich man as long as I stay here."

This reply pleased Mr. Perry, and he proposed that we should go to his house at once. "I shall take a tram," he said; "but I dare say you and Edward would prefer to walk."

At this point Lord Potter came out of the police court. Two young men in smart clothes, with silk hats and patent leather boots, were standing on the steps smoking cigarettes, and did not notice him. He stopped at the top of the steps, and said in a tone of contempt: "Will you kindly get out of my way?"

The two young men looked round hurriedly and slunk aside, taking off their hats as Lord Potter walked down the steps, ostentatiously holding his rags together to avoid contact with them.

"It is that spirit," said Mr. Perry, who had observed the scene, "that is responsible for so much of the class-hatred that is now rife. You can hardly wonder at the rich hating the poor, when they are treated in that way."

Lord Potter passed on with his nose in the air, but when he had gone another two or three steps, turned round and said to Mr. Perry: "You have had a lucky escape, sir. Your method of life is bringing you down pretty low,

and if you are wise you will give up all this nonsense, and return to the quite respectable class in which you were born."

Then he turned to me. "As for you, young man," he said, "I shall make it my business to know more about you. I don't believe you are what you pretend to be."

As he walked away with his dirty head in the air, Mr. Perry spluttered indignantly: "The *respectable* class in which I was born! He knows very well that I am of a good family—as good as his own. Really, the arrogance of the dirty set is getting past all bearing!"

"He makes you feel as if your clothes fitted you," said young Perry. "But never mind him, father. He can't touch us."

CHAPTER VI

We saw Mr. Perry into his tram, and started to walk through the town.

My observation as to the behaviour and appearance of the well-dressed people was confirmed. The men slouched along with their hands in their pockets, and the women, although they wore fine clothes, had a very ungraceful bearing. The most expensively dressed were the worst in this respect, and the poorer sort of people hustled them off the pavements and treated them with every mark of contempt.

As we were going through a narrow street between two wide ones, a stout old lady, covered with jewels, and dressed in heliotrope velvet, with some beautiful lace on her gown and enormous ostrich feathers in her hat, walked in the gutter by my side, and said in the hoarse whine of a beggar: "Do take a sovereign from a rich woman, kind gentleman. I 'aven't lef' off eating for two days, and the larder's full at 'ome."

I was about to comply with her request, for I have no prejudices against indiscriminate charity, but young Perry told her to be off, or

he'd give her in charge. She slunk away to where a carriage with two fine horses and a coachman and footman was standing at the end of the street, and drove off.

"These beggars are becoming a regular pest," said Perry. "It is because we have old clothes on. There are *some* compensations in going about like a rich man."

"Could I buy a few clothes cheap?" I asked him. "I want to do the thing thoroughly while I am with you"

He laughed at me. "I don't know why you should want to buy them *cheap*," he said. "But, of course, you can get what you want. Do you really mean you would like to be dressed like a rich man?"

"Yes, I should," I said. "I should like to have quite a large new wardrobe."

"I think you're splendid!" he said admiringly. "I only hope you won't regret it when you come to experience actual wealth."

"I hope not," I said modestly. "But whatever it costs me I am prepared to carry it through, and I should like to begin at once."

"Well, you might get what you want to play your part at the Stores. Then, if you want to do the thing thoroughly, later on you can go to a good tailor and bootmaker and so on, and have things made for you."

I said the Stores would do for the present. I was not quite clear in my mind as yet how the question of payment would work out, but it did not seem to be difficult to get hold of money in Culbut.

However, as a precautionary measure, I asked the price of the first article shown me, which was a ready-made flannel suit—dark green with a purple stripe in it, quite smart-looking.

The shopman looked at a secret mark on the label, and said: "Three pounds."

"Oh, come now!" said Perry at once. "We're not paupers, you know. You can't treat us in that way."

The man explained that the material wore exceptionally badly for that class of goods; but to us he would make it three pounds ten.

"Not a penny less than four pounds," said Perry, and I confounded his officiousness.

"I'll pay his price," I said. "I hate haggling."

"No," said Perry. "I'm not going to see you bestowed upon. He'll have to let you pay four pounds for it."

The man said he would go and see the manager, and when he had left the counter Perry said: "Don't you give way to him. These people are always open to a bargain, although they profess to sell dear. Why, that suit would

last you for ever so long! If we hadn't come in like this he would have let us pay six pounds for it."

"Do they give credit?" I asked.

"They think themselves very lucky if they're allowed to," he said, with a laugh. "I shouldn't trust them too far, if I were you; they might forget to send in their bill." *

"Oh, I'll see to that all right," I said. "I think I'll get a lot of things. What would happen if I didn't pay for them at all?"

"Well, you would be conferring a benefit on the shareholders of this company which they would thank you for pretty heartily. The business lost only ten per cent last year, and it used to lose twenty when it first started. This new manager is no good. You'll see, he'll give way about this."

He was right. I was allowed to owe four pounds for the flannel suit, and when I had been through all the departments, and set myself up thoroughly, with several suits, and with hats, boots, hosiery, and everything I could possibly want for some time to come, I was in debt to the Stores for something considerably over a hundred pounds. But under the circumstances that did not trouble me, and I determined to do a little more shopping on credit in Culbut,

* See Note.

but without young Perry, who was always trying to beat things up, and telling me that I didn't need this, and could do quite well without that."

We each took a parcel, and left the rest to be forwarded to Mr. Perry's house.

As we walked on through the streets I asked Perry to point me out any people of note whom we might meet, and as I spoke he lifted his hat to a woman who passed us.

"That is Lady Rumborough, a cousin of my mother's," he said.

I should not have picked out Lady Rumborough from a crowd as being anyone in particular, although she was a good-looking woman, and held herself well. She was dressed in a print gown, and wore a hat of plain black straw. She carried a string bag bulging with packages, and had a large lettuce under her arm.

"Is Lady Rumborough a leader of society?" I asked.

"Well, she is in a way," he said, "although she is not very poor. Lord Rumborough is a greengrocer in a fair way of business, and they hate the dirty set and all their ways."

He then explained that the dirty set was inclined to usurp the lead in the aristocratic society of Culbut. Aristocrats of extreme poverty, such as Lord Potter, belonged to it, but it was largely recruited from amongst those

who were nobodies by birth and had not infrequently risen from the opulent and leisured classes. They made a parade of their poverty, and were ashamed to be thought to possess the smallest thing, even a cake of soap.

We next passed a cheerful active young man in an old but well-cut serge suit who went by in a great hurry.

"That," said Perry, "is Albert White, the great newspaper proprietor. He has made himself a most extraordinary career."

It seemed that Mr. Albert White was the son of a man of good family, but one possessing considerable wealth. At an early age, when other young men in his position were preparing for a life of dull idleness, he decided that he would raise himself to a high position amongst the workers. He started a weekly paper which few people could read, and lost a good deal of money over it. Using this as a stepping-stone, he started other papers, each more unreadable than the last. He developed a positive genius for discovering what the people didn't want, and in a very few years had lost more than any other newspaper proprietor had dropped in a lifetime. Now he was one of the poorest men in Upsidonia, and had made his family, and many others whom he had picked out to help him, poor too.

"Others have since followed in his footsteps," said Perry, "but none have had the success that he has. His daily paper has by far the smallest circulation of any in Upsidonia. People refuse to read it in enormous numbers, and it is the worst advertising medium in journalism."

"Why?" I asked. "What is its character?"

"It is mostly written by very learned men. White does not mind how little he pays to get the right people. He makes a frank appeal to the literate, and, of course, there are fewer of them than of any class. The odd thing is that nobody ever seems to have realised before what a great field for newspaper enterprise there is amongst those who *will* have the best and nothing but it. White has taught us that you can drop more money over it, and in a shorter time, than with almost anything else."

"I suppose your learned men are amongst the poor?" I asked.

"Yes. Aren't yours?"

"We keep them fairly poor as a rule."

"It is the only possible way. The mind is of much more importance than the body, and it cannot do fullest justice to itself if it is hampered by the distractions of wealth, or clogged by luxury. For that reason, I take it, in both

countries, we keep our learned men poor, and strive after what knowledge we can."

"I can't say that in my country we *all* strive after it," I said. "We don't like to let our learned men feel that we are cutting them out."

"Ah, I think that is a mistake; but perhaps it is not a bad one. If there is one thing that our upper classes lack, it is humility. I suppose, though, that all your people *do* earnestly desire the best gifts in life—knowledge, high character, and so on?"

"Most of us, of course. But there are some who seem to prefer to be merely well off."

"Ah, I'm afraid that there will always be those; but I rather gather from things that you have let fall that you don't despise them quite as much as we do."

"Possibly a shade less. We are charitable in that respect."

"Then you are always ready to relieve a rich man of his wealth, I suppose?"

"There are quite a large number of people amongst us who are anxious to do so."

"My dear Howard, what a happy state of things! Your country must be a Utopia. Do you see that man over there? That is John De Montmorency, the popular actor manager."

He pointed to a very seedy-looking unkempt man who, however, held his head high, and gazed

around him as he walked for admiring looks, which he got in plenty, especially from the young girls.

"They say," said Perry, "that his dresser once pressed a crease into the trousers in which he was to play a lord, out of revenge for some slight, and he went on to the stage in them without noticing. It took him a long time to recover from the blow."

"Am I to believe," I asked when Mr. De Montmorency had passed us, "that in Upsidonia the chief things that are desired are, as you say, high character and knowledge and poverty?"

"There can be no difficulty in believing that, can there? Those are the best things in life, and everyone naturally desires the best things. Well, of course, poverty in itself isn't one of the best things; it is only a means to an end. Still, we are none of us perfect, and I don't deny that there are many who desire poverty for its own sake. I am interested to learn that among you there is not the fierce race for it that we have here."

"Why should anybody desire it for itself?" I asked.

"My dear fellow, if you had seen as much of the grinding bitterness of wealth as I have," he said, "you would not ask that question. To be at the mercy of your possessions, never

to be free from the deadening weight of idleness, never——."

"But surely," I interrupted, "your rich people can amuse themselves. They needn't be idle. Don't they play games, for instance?"

"Yes, the young do. We make them. But how terrible to *have* to kill time with cricket and golf and lawn-tennis, and when the game is finished to feel that nothing has been done to further the good of mankind!"

"Why do you make them play then?"

"To keep them in health. We have the Upsidonian race to think of. We can't afford to deteriorate bodily as a nation."

"And do you mean to say that the rich and healthy young man really dislikes exercising his body and amusing his mind by playing games, simply because nothing comes of it?"

"Not, perhaps, when he is quite young. But to look forward to a life of it—! Besides, he can seldom afford to do even that for long."

"Can't afford it?"

"No. It isn't expensive enough. He has to set about his business of spending money, sometimes—if his parents are very rich—at an early age, and the desire for healthy exercise soon leaves him. Why, after a day of idleness it is sometimes as much as he can do

to drag himself to bed, and then very often he can't sleep."

"But surely there is nothing very difficult about spending money, if you really set out to do it! In my country rich men buy fine pictures, and things of that sort."

"Well, unless the fine pictures in your country cost more than the poor ones, I don't see how that's to help them."

"They do cost more. They cost enormous sums."

"Yours seems a very funny sort of country, and I shouldn't say too much about it if I were you, or people will think you are romancing. Everything here that is worth having is cheap, and everything that isn't is dear. The rich aren't educated up to appreciating the good things."

"What do they learn in their schools?"*

"The education is good as far as it goes. In fact, some old-fashioned people say it is too good, and unfits the rich for the serious business of their lives, which is to spend money that the poor earn; although, of course, they would not put it in that way. There was a good deal of grumbling when the last government permitted science to be taught in the public schools. It was felt that the children of rich parents

* See Note.

would be much better employed in learning expensive habits, so as to fit them for their station in life. But I, for one, should certainly not give in to that view."

"Well then, couldn't the rich get rid of some of their wealth by building hospitals, or endowing research, or something of that sort?"

"Endowing research?" he repeated in a puzzled way. "How could they do that? Only the poor can endow research—by relieving suitable men of the wealth that might hamper them in their work."

"Well then, building hospitals, or picture galleries, public works—anything."

"But the state does all that. Of course, the rich contribute their share of the rates and taxes, and there is a good deal of grumbling amongst them at present, because the party that was lately elected to bring about profusion has turned out more economical than the party it defeated. No; it is the overplus of wealth that makes the social difficulty. It *must* be used, of course, and there *must*, unless we limit supply,* be a submerged class on whose shoulders rests the burden of using it."

"I still don't see why it shouldn't be wasted, or merely hoarded. Don't the rich men hoard their wealth?"

* See Note.

"How could they? The Government auditors would be down on them at once."

"How would they know?"

"Well, everybody has to keep accounts, and the auditors are quite sharp enough to stop any serious defalcation."*

"But why take all this trouble to see that wealth isn't wasted? It *is* wasted if it keeps a large class of people in idle luxury, when the state has made up its mind that idle luxury is a bad thing for mankind."

"Ah, my dear Howard! There you sum up the selfishness of human nature. As long as the poor have power they will put their burdens on the rich."

"Yes, the burdens of wealth. But why should they object to the rich getting rid of the overplus of wealth in any way they please? It wouldn't make any difference to their own enjoyment of work and poverty."

"It ought not to, perhaps, considering what an evil riches are. But what is it that makes the chief satisfaction of work? Surely, that you are producing something—something useful to mankind. If you knew that a considerable proportion of what you produced would be thrown away, why you might just as well work a treadmill, or play golf, instead of ploughing

* See Note

or sowing, or making useful things, such as clothes or furniture. The dignity of labour would disappear."

"Still, if the overplus of food, for instance, makes eating and drinking hateful, as it seems to do here, and the overplus of other things becomes a burden to a large proportion of the people, the result would seem to be about the same as actual waste."*

"Well, it is worse, of course, for the rich. But, unfortunately, the poor do not consider that enough. In your happy country, where the upper classes, from what you tell me, act as much for the benefit of the lower classes as for themselves, you escape these problems.

"But we will discuss these things further, and you shall see for yourself. Here we are at Magnolia Hall; allow me to give you a warm welcome to our rich abode."

* See Note.

CHAPTER VII

We had long since left the business streets of the city behind, and had come, first through a district of mean-looking houses occupied chiefly, as Perry told me, by the aristocrats of Culbut, then through a more spacious suburb of large and small villas, where he said those of a decent degree of poverty resided. The tram-line had borne us company to the edge of this quarter, and we had walked for the best part of a mile along a country road, bordered by walls or fences enclosing the gardens of larger houses.

We now turned in at a pair of gates flanked by a pretty lodge, and went along a winding drive banked on either side with rhododendrons, now in full flower, until we came out into a beautiful and open garden, whose verdant lawns were ringed by a great variety of flowering shrubs and trees. This charming garden seemed a suitable setting for the long two-storied white-painted house, with its deep eaves, old-fashioned bow windows, and creeper-grown verandah. A giant magnolia, delicately flushed with pink, was in full flower over the front of

the house. The still summer air brooded peacefully over all, and the tinkle of water from a fountain in a yew-enclosed rose-garden opening out of the drive fell gratefully on the ear.

"And this," I exclaimed, "your educated classes despise, and prefer to coop themselves up in those wretched little houses we passed!"

He looked at me in surprise. "Oh, you don't understand in the least," he said.

There was no time for further explanation, for we had now reached the front door, which stood hospitably open, affording a glimpse beyond the lobby of a cool spacious hall, paved with black and white marble.

We did not, however, enter at once. Perry rang the bell, and we waited until a butler and a footman in livery* appeared, who relieved us of the parcels we carried and showed us into a pleasant morning-room, beautifully furnished and full of flowers.

"Mr. John Howard and Mr. Edward Perry," said my friend to the butler, and we were left to ourselves.

"Excuse my asking," I said, "but do you have to observe strict formalities in your own house?"

"Oh yes," he said. "No good servants would engage us unless we undertook to give

* See Note.

them plenty of work. It is one of the many penalties of wealth."

At this point Mr. Perry came into the room, dressed as I had first seen him, and having shaved since we had parted. He renewed his welcome warmly, and introduced me to his wife, a comely grey-haired lady with agreeable manners, who said that she was delighted to see me, and to hear that I was ready to take them as I found them. I was also introduced to Miss Miriam Perry, whom I took to at once, as she was exceptionally pretty, and had a very frank and pleasing way with her. There was also a younger sister, Mollie, a pretty child of thirteen or so, and Tom, a boy of about a year older, who alone of the family was dressed in old and shabby clothes. But he had a merry freckled face and excellent manners.

"Here," said Mr. Perry, "you see us all, except my married daughter; and I hope you will like us."

I liked them already, with one exception, and I thought it possible that I might even come to like Mr. Perry himself in time, for he showed to better advantage surrounded by his family and in his own beautiful home than he had done outside.

"Mr. Howard," said Edward, "wants to live as we do while he is with us, and to study

the conditions of wealth from the inside. He has even bought a great many clothes, and perhaps he would like to put some of them on before luncheon."

This announcement, I could see, brought gratification to my hosts, but Tom looked rather disgusted. He was being educated at a day school, I learnt afterwards, where many of his companions were the sons of very poor men, and he was not yet of an age to sympathise deeply with the family taste for philanthropy.

Edward took me up to my room, and apologised for its air of comfort. The footman was unpacking the parcels we had brought, and it was possibly for his benefit that Edward said: "We keep one or two barely furnished attics for people like yourself who come to see us; but I thought that as you wanted to live for a time as the rich do, you would put up with this. We can always move you."

I said that certainly under the circumstances I preferred this room to an attic. It had a wide view of the largest slope of lawn and a well-wooded landscape beyond. There was a big bed in it, a well-furnished writing-table, and an easy-chair by the window, through which the open flowers of the magnolia outside wafted a sweet perfume.

"Well then, I will go and change my clothes,"

said Edward. "Lord Arthur will show you the bathroom, and where my room is, if you want to come in to me at any time."

He went out, and I took a closer look at the footman, who seemed to have been indicated as Lord Arthur.

He was a handsome, rather disdainful-looking young man, and when Edward had left the room he said familiarly: "Then you're one of us, eh? Why do you want to rig yourself out in this sort of kit? Which will you wear? I should recommend the white flannel, if you want to do the thing thoroughly."

"The white flannel will do very well," I said. "I am studying social conditions, and, as you say, want to do it thoroughly."

"Well, I think you're rather a fool," he said. "You can see all you want of the rich by taking service with them as I have done. You needn't live like them."

"I rather like making myself comfortable," I said tentatively.

His lip curled. "Is your mind comfortable when your body is comfortable?" he asked.

"It is more likely to be so," I replied.

"There are a good many people with low tastes in the world," he said, "but they don't generally acknowledge them in that unblushing way. If you want a life of comfort because

you like it, why don't you say so? You'll find plenty of swabs* in your own class to join in with, who don't pretend to be social students."

"I was only chaffing," I said. "Have you got a good place here?"

"Well, it's rather a bore to have to mix socially with your employers, although the Perrys are very nice people really, and if it weren't for all this philanthropic nonsense as good as anybody. Still, you can't treat them exactly as you would other rich people, and we often have to do ourselves a good deal better than we want to in the servants' hall, simply because we can't foist all the best food on to them and see that they get through it themselves. We're really helping them all the time in their silly experiment, and although the between maid and the head coachman and one or two more are reformers, most of us aren't, and simply want to be let alone to live a hard life, as we should anywhere else."

"Yes, I see. I suppose most of you are of good family and that sort of thing?"

"One of the undergardeners is a baronet, but he's got more hard work to do than you can get indoors. I'm the only other fellow with a title, but I was never very strong. All my brothers are navvies, and it's hard luck that I

* See Note.

was pilled in my medical examination. Oh yes, we're a pretty good lot on the whole. Still, domestic service isn't what it used to be. It is so crowded as a profession that it's difficult to get a place where there's enough work to do. The women are better off, because they can go out as generals. But for men it is getting more and more difficult, owing to the spread of education amongst the lower classes. The masters and mistresses are often so independent that if you don't let them live as poorly as you do yourselves they'll just give you notice. Well, I think that's all. The bathroom is just opposite. I'll go and turn on the water."

"Thanks," I said. "Quite cold, please."

An indulgent smile illumined Lord Arthur's aristocratic features. "It's plain that you've never learnt how to treat servants," he said. "If you weren't a gentleman, I should turn you on a stewing hot one for that, and see that you got into it."

CHAPTER VIII

THE luncheon to which we presently sat down was everything that it should have been from my point of view. It is true that Mrs. Perry had thoughtfully provided some large hunks of bread and cold bacon, with some beer in a tin can, for my especial benefit; but I made it quite clear that I wanted no difference made on my account. My request to be treated as one of themselves made an excellent impression on all of them except Tom, who made a frugal meal of bread and cheese, and went off to school before we were half way through. I thought it rather remarkable that a boy of his age should be able to refuse all the delicacies provided, apparently without flinching, but there was no mistaking his look of pained disgust when I refused the cold bacon.*

I noticed that all the rest of the family ate sparingly, except Mr. Perry, who asked for second supplies of omelette, asparagus, and strawberries, on the ground that he must do his duty. They left a good deal on their plates, while making it look as little as possible, and

* See Note.

for every fruit that was not quite perfect they rejected at least three, saying that they were bad. This was done with an eye on the servants, who took their share in the conversation, and whose business it appeared to be to see that everyone ate and drank as much as possible. I was hungry, and did what I could to oblige them. But I could see that I was not really pleasing them, for both butler and footman treated my handsome appetite as an indelicate thing, while doing all they could to satisfy it.

Towards the end of luncheon, the butler, whose name was Blother, said to Mrs. Perry: "Duff has sent in to say that the carriage horses want exercise, and you had better pay a good long round of calls this afternoon."

Mrs. Perry's face fell. "I rather wanted to stay at home this afternoon," she said. "It is very hot, and I thought I would read a book in the garden. Can't Mr. Duff have the horses exercised by one of the grooms this afternoon?"

"I'm afraid not, Mrs. Perry," said Blother. "He says he gave you an afternoon off yesterday, and two last week. It is not fair to refuse him employment. He is in rather an excited state about it. I should go if I were you."

"I suppose I must," she said with a sigh. "What are you going to do, Samuel?"

"I thought of having a little nap," said Mr. Perry piously. "One must not let one's little luxuries drop, or one loses sympathy with the rich. At half-past three I have a committee meeting of the Society for the Relief of Company Promoters, and at five o'clock I am to introduce a deputation of brewers* to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I shall go to the club after that for an hour, and I thought, perhaps, Mr. Howard would like to join me there."

I said I should like to do so, and it was settled that I should be driven into Culbut to join Mr. Perry at half-past five.

"That will make three carriages then, Blother," said Mr. Perry. "There needn't be any grumbling in the stables this afternoon, at any rate."

Mrs. Perry retired to dress for her afternoon's occupation, Mr. Perry sought the seclusion of the library, and Mollie went off to her governess. This left Edward and Miss Miriam, and I rather hoped that Edward might have some work to do.

My hopes were realised. He had a strenuous programme marked out. He was to instruct a class of millionaires' sons in the principles of breeding and running race-horses for loss, to audit the accounts of the Orchid-Growers' Defence Association, and to prepare a lecture

he had undertaken to deliver at a meeting of the Young Poker-Players' Mutual Improvement Society on "A Good Prose Style." This would take him all the afternoon, and I begged him earnestly not to vary his plans on my account.

He seemed obviously relieved. "If I had known you would be here," he said, "I should not have set myself so much to do; but you will find plenty of improving books in the library, and some uncomfortable chairs, and I am sure that Miriam will talk to you if you wish to converse, or play lawn tennis with you if you would like to do that."

Miriam then offered, with a charming frankness, to make herself responsible for my entertainment for the afternoon, and I was quite pleased to have it so.*

"Would you like to play tennis?" she asked me, "or shall we talk on the verandah? If you really want to suit yourself to your surroundings you can smoke."

"We might sit on the verandah for a bit," I said, "and I will certainly smoke. After that I should like to see the garden, if you will show me round. And then I shall be quite ready for lawn tennis."

For some reason, which I did not understand, she blushed when I asked her to show me the

* See Note.

garden, and turned her head away; but she only said: "Come along, then," and led the way on to the shady verandah, from the roof of which hung long trusses of wistaria, and from which the beautiful garden could be seen spread in front of us with all its colour and cool verdure.

CHAPTER IX

THERE were basket chairs on the verandah, and I took the most comfortable of them, after Miriam had chosen hers, which I should have said was the least comfortable of all.

"This is very delightful," I said. "After all, there are some compensations in being rich."

I cast a glance at her as I said this. In her pretty cool white dress, which fitted her beautifully, and with her abundant fair hair, carefully and becomingly braided, she looked just like any other girl, the daughter of well-to-do parents, who had been brought up to a life of wealth and ease. For my part I like to see young girls having a good time, and am not averse to sharing it with them. I was inclined to wonder how far this very charming young girl was permitted to enjoy naturally the good things provided for her, and how far she was affected by the economic curiosities that surrounded her.

She did not reply directly to my endeavours to draw her out. "It is very kind of you to make the best of us," she said, a little coldly.

"Please don't be offended at my ignorance

of the way things go here," I said. "I have lived all my life in different surroundings, and it is all quite new to me."

This speech did nothing to alter her slight air of coolness. "We don't live in this way for fun," she said; and I made haste to explain further.

"I don't mean that at all," I said. "I mean that the whole life of Upsidonia is new to me, poor as well as rich. In my country things are different altogether."

"How do you mean—in your country?" she asked with a puzzled air.

"I come from England," I said. "It is very much like Upsidonia in some ways; in others it is quite different."

She received my information in the same way as Edward had done. "England!" she repeated. "Where is that? I thought I was rather good at geography; I took a prize in it at school. But I have never heard of England. What direction is it in, and how did you come here?"

"I walked over the moors," I said. "I have been walking for some days. I found myself yesterday evening in a wood just the other side of Culbut."

A light seemed to break in on her. "Oh, I see!" she exclaimed. "You came over the

hills. You are a Highlander! That is very interesting. No wonder you look down a little on us Culbutians! But what made you leave that paradise to come here? And why didn't you tell us before that you were a Highlander? I am sure my father and mother would have been very flattered."

She seemed quite excited, and regarded me with curiosity not unmixed with reverence.*

"Well, I have never called myself a Highlander, exactly," I said. "In England we call the Scotch Highlanders."

"England! Scotch!" she repeated. "How extraordinary it is! I must get you to show it to me on a map."

"Yes, I should like to see a map," I said. "You see, everything is very different with us."

"Oh, I know it is. You are the most fortunate people in the world. All this must seem very extraordinary to you, and I'm afraid rather painful. I wonder you take it all as naturally as you do. I suppose you have never seen a house like this before?"

"It is certainly a very charming house," I said, "but it is not altogether unlike the one I was brought up in near London."

Her air of bewilderment returned. "Lon-

* See Note.

don!" she said. "I have never heard of any of the places you mention. Is England a district?"

"Yes; a pretty large one."

"There are many districts in the Highlands that we know very little of, but I had no idea that there were houses like this anywhere. I thought you all lived so very simply, and were spared all the difficulties that our rich have to undergo."

"In some parts of the Highlands that may be so. But in England it is different. People who lived in a house like this would be considered very fortunate, and they would certainly prefer it to a little house in a street."

"How very extraordinary!" she said again. "But wouldn't they be looked down upon?"

"Not at all. The people who live in the little houses are apt to be looked down upon."

"But don't the upper classes all live in little houses?"

"No, they live mostly in the bigger ones, some of them in much bigger ones than this; and the bigger they are the better they like them."

She became more and more interested. "I never heard anything like that before," she said. "I should think it must be rather nice, if all of them do it. Does the dirty set live

in big houses? Oh, but I forgot, you don't have a dirty set in the Highlands."

"We do in England," I said. "But we don't kow-tow to them as people seem to do here. If Lord Potter were to show his face there he would be liable to be locked up. We consider dirt a disgrace."

"Oh, so do we," she said hastily. "My aunt, Lady Blueberry, who is *really* a great lady, won't have anything to do with the dirty set. My Uncle Blueberry says that the old tradition of Upsidonia was not even extreme poverty, but only just so much as to escape the horrible burdens of wealth."

"Is your uncle——?"

"He is the Earl of Blueberry. He is a postman."

"Well, in England he would not be likely to be that. At least, he might be Postmaster-General. Our nobility is for the most part rich, and they live in the finest houses, although some of them are obliged to work for their living."

"Obliged!" she echoed. "Don't they all exercise their right to work?"

"It is a right that has somewhat fallen into abeyance, but some of them do. Others prefer to amuse themselves. In fact, to make a clean breast of it, we all like to have plenty of

money in England, so that we can live in nice houses, and go about and enjoy ourselves, and wear nice clothes, and eat and drink nice things."

A shade of disgust crossed her face. "How very different it all is to what I have been told!" she said. "But I am glad you told me about the eating and drinking. I thought you did what you did at lunch to please Mrs. Lemon, our cook."

I was a trifle disturbed at this speech. "Well, of course, that was partly the reason," I said. "And you mustn't run away with the idea that we encourage greediness. But surely, now, you must like living in a pretty house like this, with this lovely garden, better than being cooped up in a street!"

"Perhaps, if all one's friends did it," she said thoughtfully. "Don't your upper classes live in towns at all? Oh, but I forgot, there are no towns in the Highlands."

"There are in England. There is London. It is rather a big town. Our upper classes live there part of the year, if they can afford it. Some of them have country houses and town houses as well."

"At what time of the year do they go to their town houses?"

"Late spring and early summer are the times when things are at their gayest."

"But that is when the country is at its loveliest. What do they do with their country houses?"

"They shut them up—leave a few servants in them."

"Ah! I suppose they have to consider their servants. Otherwise it seems absurd for people who like the country to leave it when it is at its best."

"There are very pretty parks in London."

"So there are here. So we are not so very different in our tastes, you see."

"Tell me truthfully," I said, leaving this point; "don't you like wearing pretty clothes?"

She blushed, and laughed. "Perhaps I should if all my friends did," she said, but added a little primly: "You can be prettily dressed when you are poor, and you don't have to change your clothes two or three times a day to please your maid."

"You wouldn't have to please your maid in England," I said. "She would have to please you, and if she didn't you would get rid of her and have another one."

She looked at me incredulously. "That is the most extraordinary thing you have told me yet," she said. "Servants here are the greatest nuisance in the world. They won't let you do a thing for yourself if they can possibly stop

you, and you can't call your life your own. How I envy my cousins sometimes, who can go where they like and do what they like without for ever being obliged to think of finding work for a lot of disagreeable superior servants ! "

" But can't you do what you like ? " I asked. " Aren't you and I going to do what we like this afternoon ? Your servants haven't bothered us much so far."

" Our servants are very kind to us. Of course it is not as though we really belonged to the rich. But I must say that I am rather surprised at their having left us alone for so long."

As if in answer to her, the butler, Mr. Blother, and the footman, Lord Arthur, came out of the house at that moment, carrying a tray on which was a large jug of iced cup of some sort, and a dish of strawberries and cream.

" Oh, Mr. Blother ! " exclaimed Miriam. " You can't be so cruel as to expect us to eat and drink any more now ! "

" My dear Miriam," said Mr. Blother, in a fatherly manner, " you must eat a few strawberries, or what is the good of the gardener picking them ? I will let you off the hock cup until you have had a set or two ; but I thought that both you and Mr. Howard would be able to drink it after you had got hot. It is quite time you began to play. Arthur and I are

ready to field the balls now, and we want some exercise out of doors badly."

He and the footman bustled away to put up the net, and I went upstairs to put on a pair of tennis shoes. When I came down again the net was up and the racquets and balls were ready for us.

Lord Arthur looked at me with some displeasure. "I don't know why you couldn't have asked me to fetch your shoes," he said. "You and I will fall out if you bring your airs of poverty and independence here."

"I'll give you some work to do, if that is what you want," I said. "I'm not very good at this game, and I am a hard and rather wild hitter."

But it was Mr. Blother who fielded the balls behind Miriam, and it pleased me to see him running about here and there in his swallow-tail coat, and getting into a terrible state of perspiration and breathlessness.

When we had played a couple of sets it was Mr. Blother who stopped us.

"I think you have done enough for the present," he said, wiping his heated brow. "Thank you very much, Mr. Howard, for playing so badly. I have seldom enjoyed a game more. Now I think you can both manage to polish off some of that hock cup."

I was quite ready to do so. I rather spoilt the good impression I had made on Mr. Blother by asking if he did not feel inclined for a drink himself. He withered me with his eye, and stalked off indoors, followed by the indignant Lord Arthur, who said to me as he passed: "You seem to have brought very queer ideas of behaviour with you, wherever you have come from."

Miriam too, looked at me doubtfully when we were once more left alone together. "I know you only meant it for fun," she said, "but Mr. Blother is so kind and good that it is a shame to tease him."

"But don't you think he would like a drink?" I asked. "You saw how awfully hot he was."

"Of course he would like it," she said. "That is why I think it is too bad to tease him."

I enjoyed my own drink a good deal. Mr. Blother was a king of cup-makers.

Miriam sipped only half a glass, and I was careful not to press her to drink any more. I was quite capable of emptying the rest of the jug myself, and poured out a second glass, with the remark that I had not meant to offend Mr. Blother, and I would now try to make it up to him.

This pleased her, and she said, with her delightful frank and friendly smile: "You are

really awfully good, and I am sure the servants will adore you. We do our best to treat them well, but I am afraid we do grumble a lot, and you seem to do things to please them quite naturally."

"We are brought up to be unselfish in England," I said modestly, and filled a third glass, emptying the jug.

"Are you ready to play again?" Miriam asked. "We might get two of the maids to field the balls. They would be pleased if we were to ask them."

"I have had a good deal of exercise lately," I said, "and it is very hot. What I should really like to do would be to sit here a little longer, and then have a wander round the garden. I am very fond of gardens, and I should like to see this one, which looks lovely."

Again, to my great surprise, Miriam blushed deeply. She rose from her chair, and said, looking away from me: "I am going in now. Mollie will be out in a minute, and she will take you round the garden if you want to see it."

Then she went indoors, leaving me to wonder what on earth I had said to cause her such confusion.

CHAPTER X

I WAS not left alone long. Mollie came out of the house, and greeted me in friendly childish fashion.

"Lessons over for the day," she said, throwing herself into a chair. "I suppose you will be awfully shocked if I say that I am glad of it."

She shook her thick mass of curls at me, with a challenging laugh.

"I am not shocked in the least," I said. "I think lessons on a hot afternoon must be a great bore for little girls."

"What an awful thing to say! I am afraid you are a very wicked man, but, of course, you don't mean it. Miriam is rather tired of talking to you, and asked me to come and take her place. What shall we do?"

I was rather disturbed at the information so frankly delivered, and said boldly: "I want to see the garden. Will you take me round?"

The request, which had driven Miriam away, seemed to make no disagreeable impression on Mollie. She jumped up at once and said: "Yes, come along; and after that we will play

tennis, unless you're too tired. Tom won't play with me,* and I hardly ever get a game."

We went round the garden, which was beautifully laid out and beautifully kept. We came across three or four gardeners, all toiling as if for their lives, and one of them, I supposed, was the baronet of whom Lord Arthur had told me, although none of them looked in the least like a baronet.

There was a lovely rose garden, in a corner by itself, and as roses were rather a hobby of mine I examined each of the beds with some care. In one of them I stooped down to pick up a weed. It was the first I had seen anywhere.

"Oh, you mustn't do that," said Mollie, with round eyes expressive of horror. "Thank goodness none of the gardeners saw you! Can't you plant it again to look as if it had not been pulled up?"

I replanted the weed as if it had been something rare.

"That looks all right," said Mollie, with her head on one side. "Let's go and find Mr. Hobbs and tell him."

We went in search of the head gardener, whom we found digging in a corner of the vegetable garden. He was an austere man, and drew himself up with displeasure when Mollie

* See Note.

told him that we had found a weed in the bed of white roses.

"White roses!" he repeated. "What white roses?"

"The big ones," said Mollie. "I don't know their name."

"Don't know their name!" exclaimed Mr. Hobbs in a withering tone. "That's a nice thing to acknowledge! What is your brain for unless you learn the names of things? The big white rose is a Frau Karl Druschki, and don't you forget it. But you are a good girl to come and tell me about the weed. What weed was it now?"

"It was a dandelion," said Mollie, promptly.

But as we went away she confided to me that she only *hoped* it was a dandelion.* "I don't know anything about flowers," she said, "and don't want to. I shan't have to bother about all that sort of thing until I get older, and have to have a garden of my own."

"Haven't you got a garden of your own?" I asked her.

She looked at me with eyes full of surprise. "Why, I'm only twelve," she said.

Something in her expression, and the memory of Miriam's look when I had mentioned the garden, warned me not to pursue the subject.

* See Note.

There was some mystery here—it would almost seem some mystery of sex. I must reserve my enquiries for Edward.

We came to a large pool in the lower part of the garden. It was bordered with irises and reeds and other water-loving plants.

"I say!" exclaimed Mollie, "would you like to fish?"

I thought the suggestion a good one. I wanted to get some information out of Mollie, and I could not expect a child of her age to sit down in a chair and talk, even if the servants should permit us to do so undisturbed.

"I'll go and ask Sir Herbert to get us some worms and rods," she said, and ran off on her active black-stockinged legs.

She came back presently with the under-gardener, who carried a couple of rods and a tin of bait, and looked at me a little suspiciously as he said: "Now, Mollie, if you catch anything, you've got to eat it. There's to be no throwing back of fish into the pond."

Mollie promised that we would eat anything that we might catch, and Sir Herbert went back to his work.

When we were fairly settled, watching our floats, I said: "This is rather jolly, isn't it? Do your cousins, who are poor, have such a good time as you do?"

"Oh, much better," she replied. "They can go and fish in the parks if they want to, with their schoolfellows. I wish mother would let me go to school. Tom does, and I don't see why I shouldn't."

"But you can have your friends to play with you here, can't you?"

"I do sometimes. But they are not allowed to come very often; their mothers don't like it."

"Why not?"

"Oh, they think they might get to like *luxury!*"

She said this with an air of scorn, such as children use towards ideas of their elders which strike them as absurd.

"But they don't get to like luxury," I hazarded.

"As if they would! Fancy liking to be always changing your clothes, and having to keep them clean!* Why, they tease me about it, and offer to take away my toys!"

"Take away your toys!"

"Just as if I were really the child of rich parents, and they had to be *charitable* to me!"

"But don't you like having toys of your own, Mollie?"

"Not too many of them. Think of the rich little children whose nurses make them play

* See Note

with hundreds of dolls, when they only want to play with one! and are always telling them how sad the doll-makers would be if they saw them crying at having to play with the dolls they had taken such pains to make!"

She said this in imitation of a nurse's rebuke, of which she had evidently had experience.

"But I'm sure little girls like to have something of their very own," I said. "And they like new toys sometimes."

"Perhaps they may when they are very young. But they soon get tired of it when they know what it means. Why, Cynthia,* my cousin, once said that she would like to be rich, and have as many toys as she wanted, and her mother simply filled the house with expensive toys, and she had to play with them all. By the time she had worn them out she was jolly glad to get back to her old wooden doll, which she could dress just as she liked, and always take to bed with her. She was very careful not to say anything more about wanting to be rich after that."

So that was the system! Children were shown the satiety that comes from wealth, and taught early to shun it.

"It's such a bore having to be charitable," Mollie went on to confide in me. "When I

* See Note.

go visiting with mother I always have to bring home something that some rich child or other has got tired of. Still, if it pleases them——! Oh, look! I've got a bite!"

But it was only a nibble.

I tried again. "Have you got a pony?" I asked.

"Yes; he's a dapple-grey; his name is Bobby. I will show him to you."

"Thank you. I like looking at ponies. I suppose your cousins haven't got ponies to ride."

"They can ride in butchers' and bakers' carts. That's much more fun. Besides, they have ponies in the parks for poor children.

"Of course I love Bobby," she went on, as I digested this piece of information. "But it is rather hard not to be allowed to ride the park ponies, or to go and play in the parks at all, just because you have a garden and a pony of your own."

"Oh, you are not allowed to go into the parks?"*

"Not unless I go to tea with somebody. I do wish mother and father would leave off pretending to be rich."

"Then you would have to leave this pretty house and garden and go and live in a street."

"I should like that. There would be lots

* See Note.

of other girls and boys to play with. I say, what time is it ? "

When I looked at my watch and told her it was ten minutes past five, she jumped up in consternation, and exclaimed : " Oh, come along quickly. I didn't know it was five yet."

We hurried up through the garden, and met Mr. Hobbs, who stopped us, and said severely : " Didn't you hear the clock strike ? "

" No," said Mollie. " We were busy talking. I'm so sorry, Mr. Hobbs, I won't be late again."

" You said that yesterday," said Mr. Hobbs. " And last week I caught you out here when it was nearly six. The next time it happens I'll give you a great big box of chocolate creams, and see that you eat them all."

The explanation of this awful threat, as I learnt later, was that the gardens of the rich were given up to those who looked after them, and their friends, after certain hours, and it was not permitted to their owners to enter them.

As we went across the lawn, Sir Herbert was stringing up the tennis net, and two of the maids were standing talking to him. All three of them looked at us with displeasure as we scuttled by, and Mollie said : " I shall catch it for this when I get in."

CHAPTER XI

It was quite time for me to go and get ready to join Mr. Perry. Indeed, it was more than time, as I found when I went upstairs, and was greeted by Lord Arthur with the remark that if I wasn't in the hall ready for the carriage when it came round I should hear about it.

But I found him a good deal more anxious to be friendly than before, and presently discovered that the reason for this was that it had got about in the household that I was a "Highlander." I did not contradict the report, but refrained from giving him any information about where I really had come from, for one thing because I didn't think he would believe me, and for another because I thought it might not be a bad thing to be looked upon as the altogether superior being which the dwellers in that remote part of Upsidonia were evidently considered to be.

Fortunately, I was just ready to step into the carriage when it came round, and thus escaped an expression of censure from the coachman, who drove off quickly towards Culbut.

We picked up Mr. Perry, and as we drove on

to his club I managed to bring into the conversation a reference to the Highlands. He expressed considerable surprise to hear that I was an inhabitant of that region, which was not altogether gratifying. But he explained that, having first met me on the opposite side of the city, it had not occurred to him that I was a Highlander, otherwise he would certainly have guessed it from my perfect manners.

We arrived at the club very well pleased with one another. It was a large building, luxuriously furnished, but in very bad taste. There were some atrocious pictures on the walls, and the decorations were garish.

The big room into which we first went was full of opulent-looking gentlemen, lounging in easy chairs, drinking and smoking and talking to one another. We joined a group of them, and Mr. Perry introduced me to one or two, addressing them in a genially patronising manner. He did not tell them that I was a Highlander, and I suppose they took me for one of themselves, for their greeting was not ceremonious.

However, one of them was good enough to ask me what I would take, and I said a small whisky and soda. This was brought by a haughty-looking servant in a powdered wig and crimson plush breeches, who held out his

salver, not to my entertainer but to me, and I paid for my drink and his as well, as it seemed to be expected of me.

The talk was all about money. One gentleman with thick lips and a hooked nose said that he had done good business that afternoon. He had bought ten thousand Northern Railways, having received private information that the men had decided to strike for an all-round decrease in wages, and they had fallen three points when the news had become public. He had dropped quite a tidy little sum.

Another man said that that sort of business was too risky for him. He believed in doing a steady safe business. If he lost fifteen per cent on his capital every year he was quite satisfied.

Another said he had been looking all his life for a safe investment that would lose ten per cent without your having to worry about it, and he didn't believe it was to be found.

All these men talked in quite an uneducated way, and their manners were not attractive. They wore a good deal of heavy jewellery, and clothes that looked as if they were new, but not one of them looked or spoke like a gentleman.

Mr. Perry, who had taken his part in the conversation, and had been treated with some deference, drew me away towards another group,

saying as we crossed the room that he wanted me to see all sorts, and I must try to make myself as much one of them as possible. I should now be introduced to some racing men.

But before we reached them, Mr. Perry was hailed in a cheery but somewhat vinous voice by a man who was reclining in the depths of an easy chair by an open window, with a table at his side on which was a bottle of Maraschino half empty, and a good-sized glass of the same half full. His appearance was not markedly different from that of dozens of elderly men whom you may see after lunch at any London club, taking their ease, and perhaps their little nap, and never far removed in point of time or space from refreshment of a spirituous nature. He was sleek and well-groomed, and the tint of his face was only a trifle more plum-coloured than might betoken abstemious living.

"Well, old Perry," said this cheerful gentleman in his mellow voice, but without shifting his semi-recumbent position, "what are you going to do to raise us this afternoon? Come and help me buzz this bottle, and show your sympathy with the rich."

Mr. Perry seemed to look at the speaker, the bottle, and me, all at the same time, but with a different expression for each.

"Allow me," he said, "to introduce my

young friend, John Howard, who comes from the Highlands—Lord Charles Delagrange. He is anxious to see something of life amongst the rich, and I am showing him round. Naturally, he has never been in a place like this before, and——"

"And we must behave ourselves, eh?" interrupted Lord Charles. "Come now, old Perry, don't pretend to be above your company. You don't like poverty any more than I do. Sit down and make yourself comfortable, and touch that bell for another glass—two more glasses, if Mr. Howard will join us."

Mr. Perry touched the bell, as requested, and said with an agreeable smile: "You will have your little joke, Lord Charles. You know very well that all self-indulgence is extremely distasteful to me; but in this place I do not wish to put myself on a pedestal."

"You put yourself in that chair, old Perry," said Lord Charles, indicating one only a little less deep and easy than his own, "and don't be a humbug. Well, Mr. Howard, this must be an agreeable change to you from the Highlands. You live on porridge and Plato there, I believe. You did well to put yourself into the hands of old Perry. He'll do you top notch—nobody knows how to better than he—and send you home to spread the gospel of high

living and plain thinking among the benighted toilers with whom you have been brought up."

"I hope," said Mr. Perry, "that Mr. Howard will go back with no such lesson. If you are going to try to persuade him that my efforts to uplift the wealthy classes are a cloak for vicious desires of my own, Lord Charles, I shall not shrink from holding you up to him as an example of what to avoid."

Lord Charles hoisted himself up in his seat to pour out three glasses of the liqueur. "Fire away, old Perry," he said. "Tell him my awful story. But get outside this first; it will do you a world of good."

Mr. Perry got outside it, and began:

"Lord Charles is a younger son of the late Duke of Trumps, a man respected and beloved for his many virtues."

"A fine old boy, my governor," Lord Charles agreed, "and the best hedger and ditcher to be found in Upsidonia. But he liked his glass of beer, old Perry; don't forget that. Don't forget that he liked his glass of beer."

"I have no doubt that his Grace permitted himself moderate relaxation after the labours of the day were over," said Mr. Perry. "But it would have shocked him deeply to know that a son of his would ever sink to the level of glorying in a life of ease and sloth."

"I dare say it would," said Lord Charles, indulgently. "I dare say it would. You're not smoking, old Perry. Try one of these weeds; they're in very good condition. I'll do the same by you some day."

Mr. Perry accepted a cigar, lit it, and continued:

"Lord Charles, here, was brought up to an agricultural career, which is a tradition in his family. There are no better farm-labourers in Upsidonia than the Delagranges, and his brother, the present Duke of Trumps, who is a carter, has several times taken the first prize at the May Day parade of cart-horses. But Lord Charles grew tired of that simple, uplifting life."

"Have you ever tried uplifting hay on to a stack all through a long summer day?" asked Lord Charles, "or getting up at five o'clock on a winter's morning to look after somebody else's horses? Yes, I got tired of it."

"His temptation came," said Mr. Perry, "when he went on to a farm on the Downs, near Pepsom, and attended his first race-meeting."

"Never touched a winner all day," said Lord Charles, "and came away with a pot of money."

"Which, of course, he had to spend," said Mr. Perry. "It is often the beginning of such

a downfall as his. He allowed himself to take a pleasure in surreptitious spending, and when his father, the duke, died, he threw up his situation and became a man about town."

"Haven't a care in the world," said Lord Charles, "except the confounded inspectors. But they are never hard on a man of my birth, and I manage to escape accumulating more than I can conveniently spend. The fact is, Mr. Howard, I hate work, and I like making myself comfortable. There are plenty of others like me. Old Perry is one of them, but, of course, he has a family, and must keep up appearances."

"Mr. Howard already knows me too well not to believe that all I do is dictated by humanitarianism," said Mr. Perry. "Lord Charles is cut off from the society of his equals. His family has disowned him. At first they combined to take small sums of money from him, and tried to help him out of the morass into which he had sunk. But they have long since given it up. He now, as you see, wallows —absolutely wallows—in his degradation, and I fear he is past all hope."

"Not a bit," said Lord Charles, again hoisting himself in his chair. "I am hoping to have a very good dinner to-night, and another one to-morrow. Now I am going to play bridge.

I don't know whether you would care for a rubber, Mr. Howard ? "

For some reason Mr. Perry seemed to desire me to accept this invitation. He said he had some important business to think over, and we might leave him where he was.

" Old Perry can't put away the liquor he used to," said Lord Charles, as we went out of the room. " He's had too much of it. He wants a little nap now. He's a nice old fellow, and you'll have a good time at Magnolia Hall as long as you stay there."

CHAPTER XII

THE card-room was well occupied. We cut into a table with two other men, one of whom was the stockbroker who had made the lucky *coup* that afternoon, and the other was a disagreeable sort of fellow who, I learnt afterwards, had inherited a great deal of money and had done little all his life to diminish it. His name was Brummer; he had the manners of a costermonger, and not of one in the higher walks of that calling, if there are such.

Lord Charles treated both of them with a careless good-nature which seemed to subdue somewhat the exuberance of their vulgarity; but I thought that before we made up our table they looked about as if they would rather have joined another one. And it was evident that they suspected me of being what Brummer called contemptuously "a —— philanthropist," when the stockbroker told him I had come into the club with Mr. Perry.

Lord Charles was my partner, and I took the precaution of asking him what the points were to be, before we began.

"Oh, club points—a sovereign," he said, in an off-hand manner, and I could only hope that my luck would stand good, for they were much higher than I was accustomed to.

However, I had over ten pounds in my pocket and did not suppose that there would be much difficulty in getting more in Upsidonia if I wanted it. So I sat down with no particular uneasiness.

It was a long rubber, but it ended in Lord Charles leaving the declaration to me, and my declaring "no trumps," with four aces and a long suit of diamonds.

When he had expressed his satisfaction, and Brummer had sworn heavily at our luck, I leant back in my chair to watch him play the hand.

He was just about to begin, when there was some commotion in the room, and I looked up to see two men in blue uniforms coming towards us with notebooks in their hands.

Brummer let out a violent oath, and muttered something about the —— inspectors. Lord Charles looked up at them and said: "Hullo! Come for a drink?"

They ignored this pleasantry, and the superior of them asked what stakes we were playing for.

"Club stakes, of course," said Brummer.

"Pound points, and a hundred on the rubber."

This was a most unpleasant shock to me, until I reflected that the rubber was certainly ours by the cards on the table, and I need not play another one. So I was enabled to give my attention to the inspector, who enquired if I was a member of the club, and, when I said that I was a visitor, asked the name of my introducer.

Then he looked at the table and said: "None of you are drinking anything. When did you last imbibe?"

"A good idea!" said Lord Charles. "Let's have drinks all round. What's yours, Inspector?"

The inspector smiled indulgently, and went away to another table. Brummer and the other man immediately became violently abusive.

"They wouldn't dare put their noses into a poor man's club," said Brummer; and the other man asked: "Why should we be forced to drink, if we don't want to?"

"I always do want to," said Lord Charles. "I want a whisky and soda now as much as I ever wanted anything in my life. You'll join me, Mr. Howard?"

But I declined. There were limits.

"Why do they insist upon your drinking?" I asked.

"Oh, because it's a club, and the wine-merchants have been kicking up a row lately. They say the supply is beginning to exceed the demand;* that we're getting abstemious, but I'm sure I don't know where they get their information from. Now then—you've led a spade, Brummer. Very good. I put on the ace. I play out Dummy's seven diamonds and his two other aces; put myself in with a small club, and make my king, queen, and knave—grand slam."

He put his cards down on the table, and Brummer and his partner, after looking at them suspiciously, accepted the inevitable, and proceeded to add up the score.

We had won two hundred and thirty four points, and quite a pleasant feeling came over me as I contemplated receiving that number of pounds.

But my satisfaction was short-lived. To my unspeakable horror, I saw Lord Charles cheerfully handing over bank notes and gold to the stockbroker, and realised that I was expected to do the same to the odious Brummer. I ought to have anticipated it. If you won at anything in Upsidonia, of course, you paid out money; if you lost, you received it.

* See Note.

What was I to do? In my distress I mumbled something about having thought that the points were a pound a hundred, and then a gleam of relief came to me when it struck me that Brummer would be better pleased than anything at my omitting to pay him, especially as he had bitterly complained at his want of luck in losing the rubber, as ill-bred players always do, and had made himself intensely disagreeable to his partner for losing a possible trick at an earlier point of the game.

But unfortunately, Brummer took my evident unwillingness to pay up as an offensive mark of patronage.

"We don't want none of your blooming charity here," he said. "'Oo the something, something are you, to come 'ere crowing over us? If you win a rubber in this 'ere club, you fork out same as if you was playing with the nobs."

"Oh, yes, Howard," said Lord Charles, "you needn't be shy. Brummer don't mind taking it a bit. Why, it's a fleabite to him. He's got a hundred thousand sitting on his chest at home."

"But I tell you I haven't got it," I said. "I've only got about fifteen pounds in the world."

"Well, then, what do you want to come

poking yourself in 'ere for in that rig out?" enquired Brummer with more oaths. "We ain't a wild beast show, are we? I thought there was something fishy about you when Perry first brought you in."

"What's this? What's this?" exclaimed a voice at my elbow. "I say, Brummer, my man, don't forget yourself, you know. No language! It's one of the rules of the club, to which we have all subscribed."

I looked round to see standing behind me an athletic-looking young man in the dress of a curate.*

"Ah, Thompson!" said Lord Charles. "Come to see we're all behaving ourselves, eh? It's all right. Brummer was just going to write out a U. O. Me to give to Mr. Howard. Here's a fountain pen, Brummer. You can write it on the back of the score."

Brummer scrawled "U. O. Me £234" and signed his name to it in an execrable fist, and I put it in my pocket, wondering what I was to do about it. Then Brummer and the stock-broker got up and left the table.

Lord Charles introduced me to Mr. Thompson, and then drifted off himself, with a sort of determined carelessness.

Somewhat to my surprise, Mr. Thompson

* See Note.

gripped me affectionately by the arm just above the elbow, and led me out of the room. "Very pleased to make your acquaintance, old fellow," he said heartily. "You and I must get to know each other better. Some night, when you've got nothing better to do, you must come round to my digs and have a yarn, and a cup of coffee. Now, what have you been doing with yourself all day?"

I was led into the big room again, and deposited in a chair, from which I could see Mr. Perry slumbering by the window in the evening sunlight, while the curate took one next to me, in which he sat upright, with his legs crossed, and his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat.

"After all," he said, looking at me with manly but somewhat embarrassing tenderness, "smoking and drinking and playing cards aren't everything in the world, are they? You feel that yourself, I know. It's so jolly to feel you've done something with your day—something to raise a pal."

I muttered something to the effect that it *was* rather jolly; but he did not seem to want me particularly to help in the conversation.

"Do you take any interest in Coleoptera?" he asked, and proceeded, clasping his hands and cracking their joints: "Coleoptera is larks.

A few fellows come round to me every Tuesday evening, and we teach each other something about the beggars. How would you like to join us to-night?"

"I don't know where it is," I said.

He gave me the address of his rooms, with a half-concealed air of eagerness.

"I mean I don't know where Coleoptera is," I said. "I never could tackle geography."

"Oh, I see!" he said, not turning a hair, for which I respected him. "No, you've got it wrong, old chap. Coleoptera is beetles, you know. The fact is that I wanted to get up some subject that would give fellows like you a taste for science. There's a good deal to be lost over it, you know. Have you ever heard of Professor Gregory? He began just like that, reading with a parson fellow who took an interest in him—I mean, took an interest in science. Gregory was the son of a ground landlord, you know, and if *he* could raise himself to what he is now, anybody could. Why don't you try it, old chap? I'm sure you look intelligent enough."

"I looked as modest as possible under the circumstances, and he seemed to regard me more closely. "What's your line?" he asked. "What are you doing to scare off the oof-bird?"*

* See Note.

I don't know what I should have replied to this question, but at that moment, Mr. Perry, whom I had observed gradually waking up, came over to us and said: "Ah, Howard, I see you're in good hands, but I think we must be going off now. The carriage is at the door, and my good Thomas won't like to be kept waiting."

The curate looked at me again, with a slightly different expression, and Mr. Perry said to him: "We don't often get a Highlander here, do we, Thompson? Mr. Howard is making social enquiries. I daresay he has learnt quite a lot from you."

The curate suddenly laughed. "I am afraid I have put my foot in it, sir," he said. "If you come among us disguised as a rich man, you can't complain of being treated like one."*

He was a good fellow, and we shook hands warmly as we parted.

* See Note.

CHAPTER XIII

We arrived home in time to dress for dinner. Lord Arthur had laid out my evening clothes, and was still in the room, evidently ready for a little conversation.

"Well, I suppose you met some pretty low down swabs at old Perry's club," he began. "What did you do there?"

"I played bridge," I said, "and lost—I mean won—two hundred and thirty four pounds. I have accepted a U. O. Me for it. What do you do if you haven't got the money?"

"Why, wait till you get landed with some, and swop it off. You're jolly lucky! It's a dangerous game. Why, you might have had to receive it! Who did you play with?"

"Lord Charles Delagrange was my partner. Do you know him?"

His face changed. "He's my uncle, I'm sorry to say," he said stiffly. "But if I were to meet him in the street I should look the other way. He's a swab of the first water."

"He seems cheerful enough," I said, "and enjoys his life thoroughly, to all appearances."

"I dare say he does. But there must be times when he asks himself whether the company he keeps is worth the price he pays for it. He can't get any other. I shouldn't think there's a servants' hall in the country that would be open to him now."

"I suppose the best society in the place is to be found in the servants' hall."

"Of course it is—the best female society. You must come and dine with us one night here. We'll give you a very poor dinner."

"Thank you. You are very kind."

"Not at all. Of course, it's a little different in this house. We have to keep up the farce, and we don't like to put people like the Perrys out. We generally choose a night for our parties when they are dining out. In other houses you can just tell them upstairs that there won't be any regular dinner for them, when you think of having guests of your own."

At that moment Edward came into the room, and Lord Arthur left us, saying that he must go and help Mr. Blother with the table.

Edward seemed a trifle disturbed. "I say," he said, "what is all this about your being a Highlander?"

"Well, Miss Miriam and I settled it between ourselves that England must be in the Highlands somewhere," I explained.

He looked at me with some suspicion. "It's all very well to have a joke," he said, "and the story you made up to me was certainly very ingenious and amusing, though highly absurd. But I don't think you ought to want to keep it up any longer. It amused Miriam, but there's always the danger, where a young girl lives in such surroundings as these, that she may get a taste for luxury. You ought not to make it out to her that people could live anywhere in the way you pretend without disgrace. It is apt to confound right and wrong."

"My dear fellow," I said, "I quite see your point. But Miss Miriam is so level-headed that I am sure she would never be affected in that way."

"Perhaps not," he said. "Still, I think it is time you dropped it. Of course, I shouldn't dream of asking you where you really do come from, if you don't want to tell me. It is quite obvious that you are well-born and well-educated, and that is enough for me."

"My dear Edward, if you will let me call you so, I appreciate your delicacy. All I have told you is true, but I have not the slightest wish to publish it abroad if you think it would be better that I shouldn't."

"I think it is *much* better that you shouldn't,

unless you wish to lie under the suspicion of being touched in the head."

"No, I don't wish that at all. As I am already supposed to be a Highlander, suppose we keep to that."

"Well, if you like," he said, unwillingly. "But if you are supposed to have come from the Highlands, you ought to be more than a little learned. I wonder you haven't already been asked what your subject is. Is there any branch of learning in which you are an expert?"

"I took a First Class in the Classical Schools of my university, and am a Fellow of my College, if you know what that means."

His face brightened.* "Of course, you *are* a Highlander," he said, with a smile. "I don't know why you want to make such a mystery of it; I suppose it is out of modesty. Well, I won't bother you any more; I must go and dress. My married sister, by the by, is coming to dine with her husband. He is a very good fellow, and I am sure you will get on with him. He is striving hard to overcome the defects of his birth. You remember that I told you my sister had married into the Stock Exchange."

I found the family assembled in the drawing-

* See Note.

room. I was quite pleased to see Miriam again. I thought she looked very sweet in her white frock. She had a lovely neck and shoulders, and her hair was very soft and fair. She smiled at me as I came in, in a friendly fashion, and seemed quite to have forgotten that a slight cloud had hung over us when we had last parted. I remembered that I had not yet pumped Edward about the mystery of the garden.

I was introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Eppstein. Mr. Perry's eldest daughter must have been some years older than Miriam. She was good-looking, but wore a prim pinched-up expression. Her husband looked nervous. He was a youngish dark man, with a small moustache and hot hands. He said: "I am very pleased to make your acquaintance, sir," when we were introduced.

I took in Mrs. Perry, and had Miriam on the other side of me. Owing to the smallness of the party, Mr. and Mrs. Eppestein sat next to one another, on the other side of the table.

Curiously enough, the question I had been meaning to ask of Edward was answered for me during the conversation with which we began.

"I have a piece of news for you," said Mrs. Eppstein, to the company generally. "They say that Lady Grace Perkins has asked Sir Hugo Merton into her garden.

Everyone expressed that sort of interest with which the news of an unexpected engagement is received.

"Hugo Merton!" exclaimed Lord Arthur, who was handing round the soup. "Why, I thought he was always hanging round little Rosie Fletcher's gate."

"She wouldn't give him the invitation he wanted," said Mr. Blother, "and I suppose he got tired of waiting for it. A glass of sherry, Edward?"

"No thank you," said Edward. "Didn't Lady Grace ask John Hardy into her garden last summer?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Eppestein; "it was he who told Herman." She turned to her husband. "The *large* spoon, pet," she whispered, and then asked aloud: "Didn't he say that her garden was very badly kept, dear?"

Mr. Eppstein blushed awkwardly. "He said it wasn't so tyesty as some he'd been in," he said.

This reply caused some slight embarrassment, which Mr. Perry sought to dissipate by saying: "John Hardy has certainly received invitations from a good many ladies. No doubt he has a way with him."

"It is quite time he asked for a key," said Mrs. Perry, somewhat severely. "It is not

fair on nice girls that he should go from one garden to another as he does. And it is very ill-bred to talk about them to others."

"I didn't arst 'im abaht it," said Mr. Eppstein.

"'Ask,' pet, not 'arst,' whispered his wife.

Mr. Eppstein accepted the correction. "I didn't ask him," he said. "I fancy he was upset like at getting the chuck, and wanted to sye somethink narsty."

"Very likely that was it," said Mr. Perry, covering Mrs. Eppstein's further corrections. "Well, I am sure I hope Lady Grace and Sir Hugo will be happy together, and that it will end in his asking her for a key. He wants a wife, and a home of his own. Our friend, Sir Hugo, is employed in a large drapery establishment, Mr. Howard, where they have the system of living in. You don't know anything about that over the mountains."

"And you don't know anything about my lady's garden, either," said Edward, leaning forward to address me across his sister. "I suppose you hardly understand what we have been talking about?"

"I have gathered something of what it means," I said, glad to be able to avow my ignorance, for Miriam's benefit, "but I didn't know before. I suppose if a lady asks a man into her

garden, it means that she—she likes him ? "

"She would not do it," said Mrs. Perry, "unless he had first shown that he liked *her*, and would be glad to have the invitation."

"Rather a delicate subject for conversation at the dinner-table, isn't it ? " put in Mr. Blother, from the carving table, where he was slicing the salmon. "Why not let the men explain it when the ladies have left the room ? "

This suggestion was acceded to, and we talked on other subjects as long as the ladies were with us.

Mrs. Eppstein seemed anxious that I should understand that, although she had married beneath her, she had not done it for fun, so to speak. She talked a great deal about lifting the richer classes, and her husband seemed quite to fall in with her views upon the subject. I noticed that as dinner progressed he drank considerably more wine than Edward did, though not so much as Mr. Perry, and was inclined to take a larger share in the conversation than at the beginning.

The subject of the servants* was introduced over dessert, and Eppstein waxed eloquent and indignant at being expected to give up the use of his library after dinner, because the housemaid was reading up for matriculation

* See Note.

at the Culbut University, and wanted a quiet room to work in.

"Well, of course, we *can* sit in the drawing-room," said Mrs. Eppstein. "I don't mind that so much. But what I really had to put down my foot about the other day was the new parlour-maid objecting to Herman and me talking together at meals. I said, 'It may be quite reasonable to impose silence upon the usual rich and vulgar family, but I should never think of submitting to such a rule myself.' And then she had the impudence to say that she didn't mind *my* talking, and I could talk to her if I liked, but the master's accent was so disagreeable that it unfitted her for her work. I told her that my husband and I were one, and that if I could put up with it *she* could."

"Domestic servants are not what they were," said Mrs. Perry. There used to be something like friendship between them and their mistresses. I know many ladies, who went out to service as girls, who still visit their old mistresses, and even ask them to their own houses. But that kindly feeling is getting rare nowadays. I do not think it is all the fault of the mistresses, either, although with the spread of education, they are certainly getting very uppish."

"I think that it is entirely the fault of the

servants," said Edward. "The rich are not content now to be mere drudges, and to spend their lives on being waited on hand and foot. And it is not right that they should be. Servants are really a parasitical class, and it is unfair that the burden of providing them with work should be put upon the rich, when they are so overburdened already with having to consume more than their fair share of the produce of the country."

"There'll be a strike some day," said Eppstein, rather excitedly. "You mark my words. If the rich was to combine together and say they wouldn't eat no more than they wanted to, and all was to agree to chuck the food they didn't want away, p'raps the poor would think twice about piling it up on them."

"That would be a serious day for the country," said Mr. Perry. "We must work by legitimate means, not anarchy. The solution of the problem of overproduction can only come, I feel sure, by more individual members of the community sympathising with the rich, and sharing their lives, as we try to do here. It is not easy, I know. I have spent my own time in a humble endeavour to lead the way, but sometimes I am rather inclined to sink under the burden. I have my moments of dejection. There are times when I feel as if I

positively cannot face the prospect of another rich meal."

He sat at the foot of the table with his shirt-front crumpled and eyes slightly glazed, and it was not difficult to believe that this was one of the moments he had so feelingly alluded to, in which his philanthropic efforts sat heavily on him.

But Edward, who had been as abstemious as had been permitted him, leant forward and put his hand on his father's. "Cheer up, dad," he said. "You are doing a noble work; you must not faint under it."

"I do feel rather faint," said Mr. Perry. "I wish Blother would bring the brandy."

The ladies left us at this point, and Edward, who was in a mood of harangue, went into this question of food, which counted for so much in the economic problems of Upsidonia.

"You see, it must all come down to that in the end," he said. "Agricultural and pastoral pursuits are so much sought after that the over-production of food is the most serious item in the general over-production of the country. The cry of 'back to the towns' is all very well, but people won't live in artificial surroundings if they have once tasted the pleasure and excitement of hard bodily toil; and you can't make them."

" Well, you wouldn't like it yourself for long," said Eppstein, " not if you know when you're well off. 'Ow did you get 'ere from the 'Ighlands ? Walk ? Tell us abaht it."

" We were going to tell Howard about my lady's garden," said Edward. " You see, Howard, in the country there is room for everybody, and the young men and young girls can go courting in a natural way, in lanes with briar hedges and nightingales and the moon, and all that sort of thing. They can secure the necessary privacy. But in towns there is so little privacy. It is the one thing in which the rich are really better off than the poor, because they have large houses and gardens of their own."

" Which seem to belong more to their servants than to them," I said.

" Well, of course, the servants have to be considered. I am not an extremist, and I do not advocate, as some do, that property should carry no disadvantages other than those obviously inherent in it. If the rich, for instance, were allowed to surround themselves with the gracious things of life—space, freedom, flowers, art, leisure for study and self-improvement—without the checks that a wise State has imposed upon the abuse of those things, the incentive to break loose from the bonds of property

would be lessened. Don't you agree with me, Herman ? "

" It's a bore, sometimes, to 'ave to eat too much," Eppstein corroborated him.

" Quite so ! " said Mr. Perry, awakening suddenly out of a species of trance. " Quite so, Herman ! Then why eat too much ? I ask you—*why* eat too much ? "

" 'Cos the State makes you," said Eppstein.

" Ah ! " said Mr. Perry, wagging his head with an expression of deep wisdom. " But now you're talking politics." He then relapsed into his former air of aloofness.

" Well, to come back to my lady's garden," said Edward. " It is generally acknowledged that it is a good thing for young girls to be alone sometimes, and in beautiful surroundings, so that they may feed their minds on beautiful thoughts. So every girl in the towns, when she reaches a certain age, has a garden of her own given to her, which she has to look after entirely herself. She can retire into it whenever she pleases, and nobody may break in on her privacy. When she accepts the attentions of a man, she invites him into her garden, and if the intimacy between them stands the test, by and by he asks her for a key. If she consents to give him one, he has the right to enter her garden whenever he pleases."

"A very pretty notion," I said, thinking all the time how dreadfully forward I must have seemed to Miriam in asking her to show me the garden—which she must naturally have taken to mean *her* garden—after about an hour's acquaintance, and wondering how soon I could get her to ask me to see it of her own accord.

Eppstein laughed, rather vulgarly. "You should see the old maids standing with their garden gates wide open," he said.

"Oh, not all of them, Herman," expostulated Edward. "And some of the old maids' gardens are as beautifully kept as any young girl's, and it is quite a privilege to be invited into them. You are not expected to ask for a key, and if you did they wouldn't give you one."

"Oh, wouldn't they!" exclaimed Eppstein. "You try, my boy. Now look 'ere, I'll tell you. When I was courtin' Amelia——"

But he did not continue his reminiscences, for Mr. Perry, suddenly emerging from his gloomy trance, sang with a happy smile:

"When I married A-me-li-ar, Rum-ti tum-ti tum,"—and then laughed consumedly.

We all shared in his hilarity, and when he had relapsed once more into his solemn and even dejected mood, with the same sudden-

ness as he had emerged from it, I asked: "Do they give up their gardens when they marry?"

"Seldom at once," said Edward. "They need not give them up at all, and there are cases of old men and women still keeping up the gardens in which they first made love to one another, and retiring to them frequently. But in practice they are generally given up within a year or so. They haven't the time to look after them."

At this point Mr. Perry said that he felt rather giddy. He thought he had done rather too much during the day, and would be better in bed. So Mr. Blother was summoned to help him upstairs, and we went into the drawing-room without him.

We talked, and Miriam played to us. It was delightful to sit by the open window, looking out on to the lovely garden, which lay mysterious under a sky of spangled velvet, and listen to the sweet music she made.

By and by I felt that I did not want to talk any more, and fortunately I was left to myself for a time, where I could see the garden, and by turning my head could also see Miriam, her fair hair irradiated by the shaded lamp that stood by the piano.

Soft thoughts began to steal over me—very soft thoughts, and very sweet ones. I thought

how delightful it would be to sit every evening like this and listen to Miriam playing; and still more delightful if there should come a time when she would shut the piano and come across the room and put her hand on my shoulder, and look out on to the moonlight lawn and the dark shrubs and the starry sky with me; and neither of us would want to speak, but only to feel that the other was there.

And the night before I had spent in prison, and had not even known that there was such a girl as Miriam!

CHAPTER XIV

It was about a week after I had been welcomed into the Perry family that we were all asked to take high tea at the house of Mrs. Perry's sister, the Countess of Blueberry.

The most important thing that had happened in the meantime was that I had fallen deeply in love with Miriam. We had been much together, and our conversations had largely concerned themselves with the curious state of things obtaining in the country from which I had come. Miriam was deeply interested in what I told her, but I had to be very careful. In some respects she became more and more inclined to approve of a country in which wealth might be used to lessen care, instead of increasing it, and in which even the richest were under no cloud of inferiority. The pictures I painted of English life under conditions of monetary ease appealed alike to her natural tastes, of which in Upsidonia she had to be ashamed, if she were to show right feeling, and to the philanthropic ideals in which she had been brought up. She could never get it out of her mind that we showed great nobility of behaviour

in treating rich people with a total absence of contempt, and I did not desire that she should, although I insisted upon the fact itself.

But every now and again I came up against a painful shrinking. I had to be extraordinarily careful how I dealt with the subject of food, for instance, and I think that if I had ever described to her a city banquet, or even a college feast, I should have wiped out at a stroke all the admiration she was inclined to show for the habits and customs of my beloved country.

But short as had been the time since I had come to Magnolia Hall, I had already adapted myself somewhat to the Upsidonian point of view—indeed, a good deal more than I should have thought possible.

In the matter of food and drink, I was now inclined to despise the delicate living that I had at first taken such pleasure in. I can only say on my own behalf—if I have seemed to represent myself as greedier than I will confess to being—that I had been living a hard active life for some weeks past, and was in the most abounding physical health ; also that Mrs. Lemon, the Perrys' cook, was a supreme artist.* After all, my usual life was necessarily abstemious,

* See Note.

and it had happened to me before to get very tired of luxurious living, when I had been staying with friends accustomed to it, and to go back to my own moderate habits with relief.

So I now ate and drank sparingly at Magnolia Hall, and was inclined to feel the same disgust towards those who did neither as was commonly expressed around me. And it did not any longer seem curious to me that contempt for luxury should be a general and genuine feeling in Upsidonia. It was encouraged by constant expression, and those who might be temperamentally inclined towards what is called "doing themselves well," were ashamed of indulging their inclinations out of respect for public opinion.*

In the matter of clothes I had also somewhat changed my point of view. It is gratifying to feel one's self well-dressed, if everyone is well-dressed around one; but if one is not suitably dressed as well, the gratification disappears. It was not long before I began to feel, walking about the streets of Culbut, in the excellent clothes for which I still owed money to the Universal Stores, that I was not in the fashion. It was rather as if I had turned out to shoot, amongst a crowd of men in tweeds and woollens, wearing a shiny silk hat, varnished boots, and

* See Note.

striped trousers with creases down them. I discovered that it was only in the most exclusive set, of which Lord Potter was one of the leaders, that it was the fashion to go ragged and dirty. The ordinary members of the educated classes were as clean as we are. But they liked old clothes, and didn't want to be bothered with large collections of them, or of anything else. Those who spent the day in bodily toil always changed in the evening, wearing the newer of their two suits, which took the place of the other one when that was entirely worn out.

The mention of Lord Potter reminds me of an encounter I had with that nobleman a few days after I had hoped I had seen the last of him, in the police court.

I was walking along the road from Culbut to Magnolia Hall, and had reached the point at which the villas were beginning to get larger and to stand in gardens of some extent, when I saw a filthy looking tramp crossing the road from one gate to the other, and recognised him as I passed as Lord Potter.

He did not look at me, but when I had gone on a few yards, he called out : " Hi, you fellow ! " in an authoritative voice.

I took no notice, and he called out again more loudly, so I turned round to see what he wanted.

"Didn't you hear me call?" he asked angrily. "Which is Hoggenschlick's house?"

"I don't know," I said.

"Well, just run in and ask if Hoggenschlick lives here, and tell him that Lord Potter wants to see him. I think this is the house. If it isn't, it is the one across the road."

"Don't you think you might find out which it is for yourself?" I asked. "I'm not your servant.

His face changed as he recognised me. "Oh, it's you!" he exclaimed disagreeably; "and dressed like the cad I knew you were when I first saw you. If you give me any of your impudence you'll find yourself in trouble again, and I'll take care you don't get off this time. I shall keep my eye on you. Where are you living?"

"Where I can get a wash sometimes," I replied. "You don't seem to be so fortunate."

Then I turned round and walked on, leaving him very angry.

But to return to Miriam. England, and English life, was a little secret between us; I did not talk about them to anybody else, and asked her not to do so. The fact that she entered willingly into this understanding, which I found so agreeable, being in that state of mind in which *any* understanding with her would have

pleased me, was very gratifying, as tending to show that she had something of the same feeling about it as I had. Oh, we were getting on very well! But she had not yet invited me into her garden.

CHAPTER XV

The Earl of Blueberry was, as I have said, a suburban postman, and as it was his month for making an evening round he was not present at Lady Blueberry's tea-party. And their only son, the Young Viscount Sandpits, had just been commissioned to one of the smart gangs of navvies in which the aristocratic youth of Culbut were delighted to serve, if they were of good enough physique. He, also, was on a night shift, and I did not see him at that time. But the young Ladies Susan and Cynthia Maxted were there, and extremely nice and well-mannered children they were, and very pretty too. They wore clean print frocks, hand-knitted worsted stockings, and serviceable shoes.

Mrs. Perry, Miriam, and Mollie also wore clothes suitable for the occasion. Edward had on a suit of threadbare serge, which he had told me, coming along, that he reserved for such occasions as this ; and I wore again the clothes in which I had come into Upsidonia.

We were the only men of the party. Tom

was playing cricket, and Mr. Perry had said that he was not feeling very well, and would dine quietly at his club.

Lady Blueberry received us most graciously in her charming kitchen, from which we went into the parlour, where the table was spread.

Blueberry House was typical of those in the aristocratic quarters of Culbut. You entered by way of the scullery and kitchen, which, with a small yard, were in front of the house. But immediately behind these was a large room occupying the whole breadth of the house, and looking out on to a peaceful park.*

We were left for a few minutes in the parlour, while Lady Blueberry took the scones out of the oven and made the tea, and the Ladies Susan and Cynthia, with Mollie's help, brought plates and the teapot to the table.

The parlour was cool and airy, with well-polished floor-boards, but no carpet. The walls were whitewashed and hung with family portraits, some of which seemed to me to be very fine. There was an equestrian portrait of the first Earl of Blueberry in the dress of a royal stableman, that looked to me like a Vandyke, which, of course, it could not have been; and another of an eighteenth century countess carrying a milkpail, which I should have sworn was a

* See Note.

Sir Joshua if I had seen it anywhere else. A charming group of Lady Blueberry and her two daughters, with their own kitchen as a background, was by the famous Upsidonian artist, Corporal, who had also painted Lord Blueberry with his letter-bag, and the gallant young Sandpits, in corduroys, with his pick and shovel.

Lord Blueberry was a dignified figure of a man in this picture, and I thought as I looked at it that I should have felt some hesitation in offering him a tip at Christmas time. But if I had been a resident in Culbut, he, no doubt, would have given me one, and I should not have dared to refuse. Young Lord Sandpits was extremely handsome, and stood up boldly, with his muscular arms bare to the elbows, the picture of virile youth. The artist had got some wonderful lines into this picture, especially in the hang of the trousers, which were strapped below the knee.

The furniture in Lady Blueberry's parlour all seemed to be old, but there was very little of it. There were no easy chairs, and, indeed, no upholstery at all, or anything that detracted from the air of severe simplicity that was the note of the room, and attracted strongly by its restfulness. With the exception of the family portraits, there was no ornament whatever.

The tea-table was set with crockery of the cheapest description, but all the shapes were good, and the colour was pleasing. A grand piano in a corner of the room seemed a somewhat incongruous feature, but Miriam told me as I looked at it that her cousin Susan was exceptionally gifted musically, and she would get her to play for me after tea.*

Lady Blueberry presided most graciously at the tea-table. She had that perfectly natural air of courtesy combined with dignity which is the mark of a great lady anywhere. She was formed in a classical mould, which the severe lines of her afternoon-gown of black alpaca, relieved with touches of white at the neck and wrists, suited admirably. Her abundant hair was brushed back from her broad and placid brow, and knotted simply on the nape of her neck. There were marks of toil on her beautifully-shaped hands, which, according to Upsidonian ideas, became them better than jewels.

We talked about a step-sister of Lord Blueberry's—a Mrs. Claude Chanticleer—who was a prominent member of the dirty set. Mrs. Perry had asked about her, and Lady Blueberry's calm face had been somewhat overshadowed as she told us that Tricky, as they

* See Note.

called her, had been causing her family considerable anxiety.

"She is always going in for some new extravagance," she said. "She and Claudie gave up their two rooms, as you know, about a year ago, when Mrs. Chetwynd-Jones died of pneumonia, and took possession of her railway arch."

"But they only use that for a town residence, don't they?" asked Mrs. Perry.

"Well, of course they went out of town for the hop-picking, and went from one barn party to another through the rest of the autumn; but they were in town for the whole of the winter, and I am quite sure that Tricky must have suffered a good deal from exposure."

"She leads such a rackety life, too," said Edward. "I was coming home from my Lads' Club very late one night in January, and I saw Claudie and Mrs. Claudie and a lot of others round a watchman's shelter. None of them were speaking a word, and they all looked as if they would die of cold before the morning."

"And they call that pleasure!" said Lady Blueberry.

"Do they really persuade themselves that it is pleasure?" I asked.

"They say that endurance is the highest form of pleasure," said Lady Blueberry. "And

of course it is so in a way. At least, no sensible person would leave endurance of hardships out of their life altogether. But the dirty set, as they call them, are so eager for new sensations that they never use any method of life moderately, and would just as soon throw it over altogether, whether it was helpful or not, if anybody started some new craze."

"Susan and I saw Auntie Tricky in the gallery of the opera," said Lady Cynthia, "the night that Aunt Maude took us. Uncle Claudie wasn't there. Auntie Tricky was with Lord Hebron. And we saw them supping together at the whelk stall in Paradise Row when we were coming home."

"That will do, dear," said Lady Blueberry, with calm authority. "Lord Hebron is an old friend of Uncle Claudie's, and no doubt he had asked him to look after Auntie Tricky for the evening."

"It is a good thing, at any rate," said Edward, "that they got through the winter in their railway arch. It would not be so bad now. And I suppose they will soon be off to the strawberry fields?"

"I am not sure," said Lady Blueberry. "Tricky came to see me the other day, and told me she thought of going in for the complicated life this summer. It seems to me a perfectly

insane idea. After the privations she has gone through her digestion will not stand it. But there it is! It is a new idea; others are taking it up, and, of course, Tricky must be in the movement."

"Besides," said Edward, "the complicated life, as it is practised by the dirty set, is such a sham. If they lived it seriously, as we do, year in and year out, and really did live it with all its drawbacks, they would very soon get tired of it."

"Of course they would," said Lady Blueberry. "It is not the same thing at all."

"How do they live it?" I enquired.

"They make up a party," said Lady Blueberry, "and descend upon some large house in the country, where they live a life of ease and luxury as long as it amuses them. I think myself that to play at being rich in that way is extremely immoral. It has already been known to give some of the younger people who have practised it a taste for luxury that has led them into a life of degradation. I believe young Bertie Pilliner has been quite ruined by it. I heard the other day that he had acquired a motor-car, and joined a golf club. And he used to be such a nice boy. He was in Sandpit's gang, but, of course, he had to be requested to go."

"What becomes of the people whose houses they descend upon?" I enquired. "Do they live with them as their guests?"

Lady Blueberry laughed pleasantly. "That would not suit them at all," she said. "They choose their house—generally the most elaborate one they can find—and write and tell the owners that they are to leave it by a certain date. Then they take possession of it, and live just as if they were rich themselves, but, as Edward says, they suffer none of the inconveniences. They refuse to do the least little thing that the servants tell them, and as they are not among their own possessions they do not feel the burden of them. It is only because the servants like to have people they can associate with, instead of their masters and mistresses, and the owners of the houses are glad to have somebody to consume their stores while they can go away for a holiday, that the system is possible at all."

"It is a very dangerous game to play at," said Edward, "and goes directly against all our work. If the movement spreads to any extent it will prove to be an immense temptation to those whose principles are not firmly fixed. They will see the complicated life in an entirely false aspect, and think that it is always like that, and, perhaps, even that it is

preferable to the simple life. Then the very foundations of society will be undermined, and we shall have such a revolution as it makes me tremble to think of."

He spoke so earnestly that the young Lady Cynthia, who was of a sympathetic disposition, burst into tears, and implored her mother not to let Auntie Tricky lead the complicated life any more.

Lady Blueberry soothed her tenderly, and said that she would do what she could to prevent it, and soon afterwards we rose from the table.

Mrs. Perry stayed in the house to help her sister wash-up, and, no doubt, to have a little intimate conversation with her; and Edward went off with apologies, to some engagement in the way of self-improvement. The rest of us adjourned to the park, and when we had seen the children happily amusing themselves in the pony paddocks, where there were hurdles, and a little water-jump, I had the delight, which I had hoped all along might come to me, of wandering alone with Miriam through the bosky shades of that beautiful pleasaunce.

Miriam seemed at first a little nervous, but we soon fell into easy converse, which gradually drifted, with possibly a little urging on my part, into one of a more confidential nature. I will

not repeat any of it; perhaps it is not worth repeating. I said things that come easily to the lips of any lover, and she received them with a sweet modesty that made me think them almost inspired.

It was a lovely quiet evening; the retired walks in which we strolled amongst the trees and flowers might have been deep in the country, instead of in the heart of a city; and if we met, as we did sometimes, other pairs of lovers, who had fled to these comparative solitudes, they only seemed to justify our own emotional condition. It soon became wooing in dead earnest with me, but I knew that I must not pass a certain point in my declarations until Miriam gave me to understand that I had leave to do so.

At last, when once or twice she had turned from me, twisting her handkerchief in her little ungloved hands, and pausing as if about to say something which she could not make up her mind to say, I cried: "Oh, this heavenly garden! I shall never forget walking here with you this evening as long as I live."

Then she turned towards me, and smiled and blushed and dropped her eyes again, and said: "Would you like to walk with me in *my* garden?"

At these words I forgot all about Upsidonia,

and the possibility of shocking her by accelerating its etiquette. Hang etiquette at so sweet a moment! I took her in my arms and kissed her.

And apparently etiquette was the same at this stage in Upsidonia as everywhere else. Or else she forgot all about it too.

CHAPTER XVI

I AM not going to describe Miriam's garden. I will only say that of all the gardens I have ever seen, large or small, it remains in my memory as the quietest, the most retired and the most beautiful. It was not long before I asked for a key, and Miriam gave me one; and I was free of that enchanted spot, and of all the sweet intercourse it brought me.

When, on that evening, we hurried away from the comparative solitude of the park, to enfence ourselves in the complete solitude of Miriam's garden, and left Mrs. Perry and Mollie to come home by themselves, the only excuse that we could offer was the true one. Before the evening was out it was known to all the occupants of Magnolia Hall that Miriam had asked me into her garden.

Dear Mrs. Perry smiled on us and kissed us both. She was an unworldly woman, and only desired her daughter's happiness. Mollie showed a gratifying excitement at the unexpected news; Tom eyed me rather suspiciously, and, while not witholding his congratu-

lations, said enigmatically that it was my white flannel suit, but he supposed he should get used to it in time. Edward expressed some doubts. I had to have it out with Edward. But that was later. When he came home that night I had already interviewed Mr. Perry.

Mr. Perry was as kind as possible, but, as was only natural, wanted to know something about my circumstances.

"You are aware," he said "of the great work in which my life is spent. I am not able to do as much for my daughters as I should look to doing, if I lived as my neighbours do. But I will do what I can. You shall allow me three hundred pounds a year, and I will get rid of it as best I can. At five per cent interest, that would be tantamount to a settlement of six thousand pounds; and I should charge my estate with it, so that you would not suffer in the event of my death."

I thanked him suitably, and, gathering my wits about me, offered to settle upon Miriam Mr. Brunner's U. O. Me for two hundred and thirty-four pounds, and my account with the Universal Stores of a hundred pounds odd.

"I am sorry to say that those are the only debts I have in the world," I said, "but on the other hand I do not earn much money."

"Excuse my asking the question," said Mr.

Perry diffidently, "but what is your occupation?"

"I will make a clean breast of it to you," I said. "I am a University Extension lecturer, and am also employed in editing educational works."

"A very honourable occupation," said Mr. Perry. "A scholar is always a respectable person, and his calling is not a lucrative one."

"I hope," I said, "that there will never be any doubt about my being able to support Miriam in the poor way in which a daughter of yours ought to live."

Mr. Perry sighed pensively. "I will not deny," he said, "that I should have liked a larger settlement. I have already sacrificed one daughter to my passion for the amelioration of mankind, and although Herman Eppstein's character is irreproachable I suffer somewhat from the remarks of my friends as to that marriage. I should have liked Miriam to make what the world calls a good match, and to be placed beyond all risk of wealth. Still, with what I can do for you, you will start your married life in embarrassed circumstances, and we must hope that no unforeseen accidents will occur. If you keep to your comparatively ill-paid work, and avoid the temptation that so many young men fall into, of trying to get poor quick, all will

go well. It is something, at any rate, to have a daughter marrying into a Highland family, and my friends can hardly reproach me with another misalliance in that respect."

He said this with an agreeable smile, and I left him, feeling that I had got through the interview more easily than I could have hoped for.

I had the congratulations of Lord Arthur. He himself was in the stage of walking out, or rather of walking in her garden, with a housemaid from a neighbouring establishment—one of the prettiest of the débutantes of the season—and was inclined towards sympathy with my state of mind. He said that the earlier a fellow settled down in life the better it was for him, and directly he and his fiancée could find a situation as butler and housekeeper to an amenable married couple without encumbrances, their wedding would take place. He talked more about his own love affair than about mine, and made it plain—although I am sure that he did not intend to—that my engagement was but a moderate affair beside his. His father was a Marquis, and would largely decrease his younger son's allowance upon his marriage; and his prospective father-in-law was a Dean of aristocratic lineage, who was prepared to settle on his daughter the whole debt for repairing the West front of his cathedral.

Edward's attitude was a mixture of pleasure and anxiety. He said he liked me personally, and there was no-one to whom he would rather see his sister married if he saw no difficulties in the way. "You won't tell us where you come from," he said, rather peevishly. "No one can call me curious about my neighbours' affairs—I have far too many and important ones of my own to occupy me—but if you are going to marry my sister I *should* like to know something more about you. How *did* you come here? If you walked from the Highlands, you couldn't have come into Culbut on the side on which my father first saw you."

"I have already told you how I came," I said. "I walked over the moors, and came through an underground passage into the wood where your father found me. I don't profess to understand it; but that is exactly how it happened."

He looked at me suspiciously. "My dear fellow," he said, "you are playing with me. My father found you asleep in a little copse that you have to pass through to get to the Female Penitentiary, which he was visiting that afternoon. Beyond that there is at least a mile of suburb; it is on the high road to the town of Somersalt, and the country is well populated all the way."

"I am not surprised to hear it," I said. "I told you that I did not understand what had happened. But I have given you the facts as I remember them."

"Then it is very plain," said Edward, "that you must have suffered in your brain, and have escaped from some lunatic asylum. Your behaviour when we first met would seem to point to that; and the wildness of the ideas which you disclosed to me was more like what one would expect to exist in the brain of a maniac than anything else. I think it is very likely that you do come from the Highlands; or why should you have mentioned that region at all? Your appearance is good, and it is evident that you have come from some place where you have filled a position of dignity."

"I am glad that it strikes you like that," I said. "But I don't feel in the least like a lunatic. In fact, I am quite sure that I am as sane as your are."

"I think you are, *now*," said Edward; "and I don't see any reason why you shouldn't remain so. If that is really the solution of your eccentricities, then all my difficulties are done away with, and I can welcome you, my dear fellow, cordially as a brother-in-law."

"Oh!" I said, somewhat taken aback. "You don't think that I might break out again?"

"I should think it is unlikely; but if you did, we could easily have you put away for a time. The great advantage would be that Miriam could always get a divorce on the ground of insanity of partner, whenever she wished it."

"Is that a ground for divorce in Upsidonia?"

"Yes; the passing of that law has been a great boon. People under suspicion of weak intellect have become much more marriageable than they were before."

"I shouldn't like to begin married life with the idea of a divorce hanging over me."

"I don't say that Miriam would allow herself to count on a divorce at present; and if I were you I should not tell her that you have suffered from brain trouble."

"I won't," I said.

"No; and I won't, either. But one never knows what may happen in married life, and it would be a comfort to know that Miriam would not be tied to you for life if you turned out badly."

"Well, supposing we leave it at that," I said. "I think you're wrong about my brain trouble, but if your idea comforts you at all, keep it by all means; but keep it to yourself."

CHAPTER XVII

It is not customary, at least in England, to undertake the responsibilities of married life without a probability of being able to carry them out, and at the time I had come into Upsidonia I had not been in what is called a position to marry. In that country my position was quite satisfactory in this respect, but I did not propose to spend the rest of my life in Upsidonia.

So I now had to think seriously about acquiring that independence which would sweeten the existence that I looked forward to, with dear Miriam as my life-long companion. I was as happy as a king in her garden, but having achieved the step of being invited into it, I now looked forward eagerly to the next step, which was to get out of Upsidonia by the way I had come, and to take her with me.

She was quite ready to go, after our marriage. Indeed, the Highlands, where it was supposed that we should settle down, was so cut off from communication with the rest of

Upsidonia, that a separation was taken for granted, both by herself and her family.*

"Tell me about the sort of house we shall live in," said Miriam, as we sat together on a seat in her garden, under the shade of a sweet-smelling lime.

"My dear," I said, "we shall be able to live in any sort of house we want to. It is delightful to think of. All the beautiful places in the world are open to us, and we need be tied to none of them."

"I don't want more than one house," said Miriam. "I can't get it out of my head, in spite of everything you have told me, that more than one would be a bother. Besides, you wouldn't know which to call your home."

"Quite right," I said. "Even with us, more than one house might quite well be a bother; and to enjoy your possessions you want to have them all around you."

"I suppose I *shall* get to enjoy possessions," she said dubiously. "But I don't want too many of them, John dear."

"You shall have just as many, or just as few, as you please. We shall enjoy ourselves immensely in acquiring them."

"Do you think we shall? I shall try and like what you like. But it is a little difficult."

* See Note.

"You shall have some beautiful frocks, Miriam. I know you will like that."

She laughed. "How wicked it sounds!" she said. "Don't tell mother that I shall like having beautiful frocks. Are you *sure* that other girls—other married women—won't look down on me if I am well-dressed? I shouldn't like to be looked down upon, for *your* sake."

"My dear, get all that out of your head. The more you spend the less likely you are to be looked down upon."

"It sounds so funny. But it sounds rather nice, too. Of course, it isn't really *wrong* to like spending money, rather, if everybody else does it."

"Not a bit. Not if you've got it to spend. And we *shall* have. I am going to see about that. Well, shall we live in the country?"

"That would be rather nice, John. In a dear little house with a pretty garden, and no labour-saving appliances."

"I don't think you will want to live in a little house when you get to England. I thought, perhaps, we might find some very delightful old-fashioned country house, in a beautiful part of the country, with a few thousand acres of land, good shooting, and a model home farm, which I could tackle myself."

"Do you know anything about farming?"

"Not much; but I should rather like to try it."

"Isn't it rather dangerous? Mightn't you make a lot of money over it?"

"I think I could escape the danger. How would you like an old red-brick house, with a moat, and beautiful carving and plastering and all that sort of thing inside? I know of one near where I was born that we might be able to get."

"Is it in a village, with nice people in it?"

"It is near a charming village, which would belong to us. There aren't any other big houses very near."

"Would the other people call on us, and be friendly?"

"Oh, yes. There are a lot of good houses all about. The neighbours would all call on us."

"Yes, the rich neighbours. But the people in the village? Would the vicar's wife call on us, if we lived in a house like that?"

"I expect she would, if the vicar has a wife, of which I am not sure."

"And the labourers' wives—would they call?"

"Probably not. No, I don't think the labourers' wives would call."

"Then shouldn't we feel rather out of it?"

"You could call on them if you wanted to.

They would be very pleased to see you. *Any* body would be pleased to see you."

"Dear old boy!" she said affectionately. "You think far too much of me. But I like you to. Somehow I don't think I should like to live in a house like that, John. For one thing, I shouldn't like to be always going to see people who wouldn't come and see me. Couldn't we live somewhere among our own sort of people—the people who are well-off, and *yet* well-educated, that you told me about —well, like *we* should be?"

"You don't want to live in London, do you?"

"That's where you live, isn't it?"

"Only because my work makes it convenient."

"But you wouldn't give up your work?"

"I should give up some of it, that I do at present. I don't say I should give up *all* work."

"Oh no, you couldn't do that."

"But I shouldn't have to live in London in order to work. I would much rather live out of it, and have it to go to."

"That is what I really feel about Culbut. If we could live here, just as we do, without feeling that we were different from other people, I should like it better than living in Culbut itself. Do they look down on the rich people living in the suburbs near London, as they do here?"

"There is a tendency that way," I admitted. "How would you like to live at Cambridge? I should be amongst friends, and there would be plenty to do there."

"I think it would be delightful from what you have told me about it. You could do your work there, couldn't you?"

"Yes, I could do a lot of work, if I wanted to; and I could always get a game of some sort."

"I thought it was only the undergraduates who played games. You couldn't row in the boat, could you?"

"I could row *you* in a boat. We could get a lot of fun in Cambridge, and we could always go to London when we wanted to."

"And we could get a pretty house there—not too big?"

"Yes, we could get that. I think perhaps you're right about the big house. Whoever loves the golden mean will avoid a palace as much as a hovel. Horace says that, or something like it, and what is good enough for Horace is good enough for me, also for my sweet Upsidonian bride. Miriam, I adore you, and it is at least a quarter of an hour since I had a kiss."

So we settled to live in Cambridge when we got to England, in the prettiest house we could find, with the prettiest garden, and I prided

myself greatly on the moderation of my desires, while Miriam wondered whether we were not laying up trouble for ourselves, when I said that we should want at least four servants in the sort of house I had in my mind.

CHAPTER XVIII

A DAY or two after Miriam had first invited me into her garden the invitation was made public in the fashionable intelligence of the Culbut newspapers, and she and I were the recipients of many congratulations from the numerous friends and relations of the Perrys.

We were entertained by not a few of them. We went to Sunday mid-day dinner with the Earl and Countess of Rumborough, in the parlour behind their shop, over which an aroma of jaded cauliflower lay more in evidence than is customary in the mansions of the great. We drank tea again with the Earl and Countess of Blueberry, and this time the head of the house was present, and treated me with a stately courtesy that impressed me a good deal with the dignity of the family with which I was about to connect myself. I also dined with the Viscount Sandpits, at the mess of his gang, sitting on a plank in the middle of one of the busiest streets in Culbut, and drinking beer out of a tin can.* A married sister of Mr. Perry's, not bitten with philanthropic ideas, gave a

* See Note.

theatre party for us, and we sat in the front row of the pit, after an agreeable wait of an hour outside the door, and ate oranges between the acts. And we conferred a much-appreciated honour on a rich relation of Mr. Perry's by accepting an invitation to a dinner party at her house. Her husband had been unfortunate in the coal business, and had sunk from a clerkship in a colliery company to owning the whole concern. Most of our fellow guests were melancholy and rather subservient people who had made a similar mess of their lives, and were pathetically envious of the bright prospects that were opening out before Miriam and me.

And finally, Mrs. Claudie Chanticleer, who had turned up one morning at Magnolia Hall, in a bedraggled and hectic state, to take away a few scraps from the dustbin, invited us to a pic-nic in the country, to meet all that was smartest and dirtiest in the exclusive set of which she was an ornament.

We were a little doubtful about accepting this invitation, gratifying as it was. It was Mr. Perry who pressed us to do so. He said that he hated the dirty set and all their ways. It was not through such as they that the regeneration of Upsidonian society would come. At the same time, they included amongst them some of the most aristocratic families in the country,

and it would give us a *cachet* to have our names in the papers as having taken part in one of their entertainments. When we still demurred, he pointed out that my social investigations could not be considered complete unless I mixed with all classes of the community. So at last we accepted the invitation.

Mr. Perry refused it for himself, as he said he had a touch of rheumatism and was afraid of the damp grass; but Edward accepted, saying that he had been working very hard lately and wanted recreation; and Mrs. Perry went to chaperon Miriam. Mrs. Eppstein, who had seen the announcement of the coming function in the papers, came round to hear all about it, and said that she had not for a moment expected that Tricky Chanticleer would have asked *her*, although they had been at school together, and in those days nobody thought anything of Tricky, who had always had a red nose.

Most of us walked to the place appointed for the pic-nic, which was on a stretch of grass beside a high road; and we were the dirtiest and most disreputable-looking company I have ever been in. But Mrs. Perry, and some of the older ladies, went in the Duchess of Somersault's caravan, which was hung round with baskets and brooms and wicker chairs; and

there were a few donkey carts as well, and an organ barrow for the younger children who could not be left behind. Mrs. Claudie brought what was necessary for the pic-nic in an old perambulator, which she wheeled herself.

We were accompanied all the way by a crowd of rich sightseers, and a favourite amusement of the younger and sprightlier members of our party was to get a ride behind the carriages, and for the others to cry "Whip behind!" and to shriek with laughter at them.

The food consisted of scraps wrapped up in pieces of newspaper, but tea was made in an old tin pot over a fire of sticks, and everyone had brought what they wanted in the way of mugs and utensils for themselves. I must confess that if one didn't eat, or only ate the eggs and fruit which some of the young bloods had raided from the farmhouses that we passed on the way, the entertainment was amusing enough. It was rather annoying to be surrounded by a crowd of gaping sightseers, but the company seemed to be used to it, and, indeed, to prefer it to seclusion, or they would not have fixed upon so public a spot. Newspaper reporters were a good deal in evidence, and cameras were directed on us from all sides, as we sat on the grass and enjoyed ourselves.

There were many quite intelligent people

there. The company, ragged and filthy as it was, was superior to that which I had met in Mr. Perry's club, or to the people I had come across in the large houses in which I had gone slumming with Mrs. Perry.

I happened to sit on the grass next to a travelling tinker, who told me that he had been Master of a college at Coxford, but had given it up because he wanted to see more of life.

"I have often been accused of being a snob," he said, "especially by those who are envious of the fine company I keep. It is true that my birth would not entitle me to a place in this brilliant society, but I consider that my learning ought to gain me an entrance into any society, and it has as a matter of fact gained me an entrance into this. I consider that this is the best society that can be had, not because it is aristocratic and exclusive, but because it opens up larger vistas of life. Purely learned society does not do that, and after spending over thirty years of my life in Coxford, I grew tired of it, and set out to play my part in the great world."

Finding himself possessed of a sympathetic listener, he expatiated further on the advantages of his present life. He had not seen his way to denuding himself of all property. He had acquired his tinker's outfit because his previous

life had unfitted him for the purest form of idleness. "One has to be born and brought up to that," he said, "and, as I told you, I do not pretend to have had the advantages of some of our friends about us here."

"But isn't work a good thing?" I asked; for here he seemed to be denying one of the basic principles of Upsidonian philosophy.

"It is not one of the best things in itself," he said, "although for the great mass of mankind it is necessary. Freedom and knowledge are the best things; and freedom is even better than knowledge."

"I shouldn't have thought that all the people about us here were remarkable for their love of knowledge," I said.

"Not perhaps of knowledge to be learnt from books," he said, "though a good many of them are not lacking in that. But in knowledge that comes from going about in the world, and seeing human nature denuded of all its trappings, there is hardly any one of those you see around you who is not superior to the most learned scholars of the universities. They know the simple facts of life, as none who do not enjoy the freedom of extreme poverty can possibly know them; and the simple facts of life are the great facts of life."

"Do you consider poverty to be an end in

itself?" I asked, mindful of the criticisms I had heard directed against the dirty set.

"It is so near to being an end," he said, "that there is no harm in considering it so. It is only by denuding yourself of everything that you can possess everything—beginning with yourself, which is the only possession really worth anything, and the only one which those foolish people who cannot make up their minds to do without *some* form of property never can attain to. Why should I want more than the whole earth? It is mine, if I do not shut myself up in one little corner of it and put a fence round me. The moment I do that I lose all the rest. I have exchanged the world for a building plot. With every possession I permit myself, I gouge out a weak place in my armour; I am vulnerable at that point. Possessing nothing, I am impervious to attack."

"You can't possess absolutely nothing," I said. "You must have clothes, for instance."

"You must, as society is at present constituted; and you are vulnerable, as I said, at that point. If anybody takes away my clothes, I lose my freedom. I cannot go about till I have found some more. And if anybody takes away my tinker's barrow, I lose the work that my training has unfitted me to be without.

It is not, strictly speaking, the barrow that I am vulnerable over, because if I could do without it I should have practically my only burden removed; it is the habits I have acquired that are the unfortunate possession there. And that is why book-learning would be considered an evil in a purer state of society. Books themselves are, of course, the most odious form of bondage, and even in my tied down days I never would acquire them for myself, but borrowed those I could not do without, and committed what was necessary to memory."

"Why should book-learning be considered an evil?" I asked.

"Because it is an acquisition. You are vulnerable in your memory, in which you have stored it. The only knowledge that is worth having is that which impresses itself on the collective mind of mankind. Nobody can take that away from you, because you share it with all the rest. It is all about you."

"Excuse my touching upon a possibly delicate subject," I said, "but do you object to the name that is commonly fastened on to you?"

"The dirty set? Not at all. Why should I? Cleanliness is only a habit, and a very binding and inconvenient one. If you can break yourself of that one habit alone, you are well on the way to realise what freedom means.

You have broken the chain that keeps you circling round in the narrow orbit of the soap dish and the water jug, and can wander where the spirit leads you. I have not taken a bath since I left Coxford, and all desire to do so has now left me."

The fact had obtruded itself upon me to such an extent that the desire on my part to leave *him* now became insistent, and as there came a general movement at the moment towards the cocoa-nut shies, put up by Sir Sigismund Rosenbaum, I withdrew myself from his society. But he was an interesting man, and had given me something to think over.

CHAPTER XIX

It was at this point that Lord Potter came upon the scene. He had, I believe, refused Mrs. Claudie's invitation, but whether he could not bear to be left out of any important society function, or whether he had made up his mind to take this opportunity of making himself publicly unpleasant to me, he came shuffling along the road, with his toes sticking out of his boots, and was greeted with acclamations by the distinguished company.

I happened to be standing next to Mrs. Claudie when he came up to her, and he favoured me with an indignant and contemptuous glare before he showed me his shoulder, shook hands with her, and said in a loud voice : " And where is the fortunate gentleman from the Highlands ? I should like to be introduced to him."

Mrs. Claudie indicated me. " This is Mr. Howard," she said. " Let me introduce you to Lord Potter."

Lord Potter affected an air of intense astonishment. " This fellow ! " he exclaimed. " My dear lady, you have been victimised. This

is an impudent adventurer, who spent his first night in Culbut in a gaol. He may be good enough company for Mr. Perry, but I am more surprised than I can say to find him here."

There was an awkward silence, which I broke by saying: "I am just as surprised to see Lord Potter here as he can be to see me. He knew perfectly well who I was. He could have stopped away if he didn't want to meet me."

Lord Potter ignored this speech. "I am very sorry to have to cast a cloud over your pleasant party, Mrs. Chanticleer," he said, "but this fellow is not what he pretends to be. He is no more a Highlander than I am. When I get back to town I shall put the police on to him. I expect it will be found that he has absconded from some big house and has left a lot of money behind him. He is masquerading as a poor man, but he will certainly get into trouble over it. I should advise you to pack him off, and have no more to do with him."

Fortunately, Miriam was not near us at the time, but I saw Edward shouldering his way through the group of puzzled and rather scandalised people who surrounded us. Nobody seemed inclined to say anything, and I had had time during Lord Potter's speech to reflect that he could not know that I was not a High-

lander, and that he had put a weapon into my hands by his affectation of not knowing who I was.

"I will certainly leave your party if you wish me to, Mrs. Chanticleer," I said. "Lord Potter and I have come up against one another before. It is true that when I first came into Culbut he managed to get me arrested for playing rather a foolish practical joke upon him, which he doesn't seem able to forget. But when he tells you he is sorry to disturb your party, he is not speaking the truth, because he can't have come here for any other purpose. He knew that he would find me here, and has not scrupled to break in on your brilliant and memorable gathering, with the object of ruining its success by his absurd charges."

There were murmurs among the aristocratic dames who were gathered about us. Although Lord Potter was the dirtiest of the dirty, and held a high position among the men of the set, I heard afterwards that he was not popular among the ladies, not only because of his arrogance, but because, being a most eligible bachelor, he had omitted to marry so many of their daughters. Besides, Mrs. Claudie's party had gone with such a swing so far that it was felt to be too bad of him to come in in this way and try to spoil it.

But Mrs. Claudie showed herself full of tact and resource. She laughed lightly. "I really can't be expected to settle a silly quarrel between two men," she said. "I have all my own quarrels to settle, and most of my women friends' besides. Come and have a shy at Siggy Rosenbaum's nuts, Lord Potter; and, Mr. Howard, you go and find Miriam and take her to have a few s'rimps."

Perhaps Lord Potter would have allowed himself to hold over his account with me for the time being, and I certainly had no wish to carry it on then or at any time. But unfortunately Edward had by this time arrived fully on the scene, and with all his excellent qualities he was a trifle too weighty for a situation that wanted delicate handling.

"Mr. Howard is a guest in my father's house," he said, his face pale and determined from the stress of the moment, "and I cannot allow him to be insulted."

"Oh, my dear Edward, nobody wants to insult anybody," said Mrs. Claudie. "Please let us go to the cocoanuts."

But Lord Potter's temper had been aroused by the challenge. "I have nothing to do with you or your father," he said disagreeably. "You have both unclassed yourselves. You can keep what company you please, as far as

I am concerned. But when you take into your house a highly suspicious character, you ought to keep him to yourselves, and not foist him on to respectable company."

Edward was about to reply hotly, but I didn't want to leave my case in his hands; he knew too much about me, and might give it away in his unthinking annoyance.

"How do you know I am staying with Mr. Perry?" I asked quickly. "You pretended just now to be surprised to find I was *that* Howard. And yet you heard my name when we first met, and you saw me go away with Mr. Perry."

"I will settle with you later, sir," he said furiously. "You have been going about in expensive clothes, and I have reason to believe you are an imposter, and are wanted by the police."

"Oh, do leave off and come to the cocoanuts," cried poor Mrs. Claudie, desolated at the prospect of a disturbance. But the situation was now beyond her.

"Perhaps you will say that my father and I are imposters, because we go about in clean clothes," said Edward angrily. "Mr. Howard is studying social conditions, as we are. He is a gentleman, as anyone can see, whatever he chooses to wear."

Perhaps it is rather conceited of me to mention it, but there were murmurs of approval here. In my old Norfolk jacket and weather-beaten hat, I must have appeared all that was desirable in the matter of fashionable attire, according to Upsidonian standards.

Encouraged by these murmurs, I stuck to my point with Lord Potter. "Will you answer a plain question?" I asked him. "Did you know who I was when you came and tried to break up this delightful party, or did you tell Mrs. Chanticleer a lie?"

It was not much of a point, but it settled him. There were more murmurs, and Mrs. Claudie said reproachfully: "You know you did refuse my invitation, Lord Potter. And if you did know who Mr. Howard was, it is not very friendly of you to come after all, and try to spoil our fun."

The Duchess of Somersault, who was a great enough lady not to stand in awe of anybody, and had already married off all her daughters, now intervened:

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Hezekiah Potter," she said in a loud clear voice. "Anybody would think this was a reception by the wife of a millionaire by the way you poke yourself in on it and try to start a vulgar brawl. I shall be very pleased to welcome Mr. Howard

at any time to my van, and I am not in the habit of receiving adventurers there."

Such a bold, and, to me, almost overwhelming, offer of recognition from so great a lady naturally turned the tables completely in my favour. Lord Potter shrugged his shoulders, one of which could be plainly seen through the discoloured cloth of his filthy jacket, muttered something into his ragged beard, and shuffled off in the dust towards Culbut. Mrs. Claudie instantly collected a party of young people to throw at Sir Sigismund's cocoanuts ; and the incident appeared to be completely at an end.

But I could see that people were talking about it for the rest of the afternoon, and as we made our way homewards later on, and I very much fear that Mrs. Claudie Chanticleer wept tears of disappointment when she retired to her railway arch that night, over this unfortunate interruption of what would otherwise have been the most talked-of assembly of the now waning season.

As far as I was concerned, I was made to feel that I had come out of my engagement with Lord Potter with credit. I had stood up to a great man, and he had been driven off the field by a great lady. I was even something of a lion for the rest of the afternoon, and if I had wished could have taken my place then

and there as a popular addition to the dirty set, and enjoyed all the advantages of that enviable condition.

But Edward's gloomy brow, as he ranged apart with his hands in his pockets, warned me that there was trouble ahead, and I had not been too busily engaged with Lord Potter to miss the spectacle of excited newspaper reporters edging in amongst the spectators and busily taking down all that was said in their notebooks.

What was quite certain was that I could no longer expect to be able to hide such light as I might give forth under a bushel. It would be known all over the country to-morrow that I had been denounced as an adventurer, and accused of representing myself as coming from a place which I had never seen.

A nice young reporter, more enterprising than the rest, who had hurried off on their bicycles to hand in their copy, did try to interview me, and I wished I had been in a position to give him the information for his paper that he asked for. It was only for my address in the Highlands, and a statement of why and how I had come to Culbut, and would have settled the matter for me, if I had really been the completely misunderstood person that I was supposed to be.

But I had to send him away empty, and I am sorry to say that he was annoyed with me, and hinted in his account of the fracas that there was more in Lord Potter's charges than appeared on the surface.

I was also somewhat disturbed by a conversation I had with the Duchess of Somersault, sitting proudly on the tail-board of her van, in sight of everybody.

She said that she had never crossed the mountains in her wanderings, but had been pretty close to them, and she mentioned the names of several members of the Highland aristocracy with whom she was acquainted. She seemed a little disappointed when I showed myself ignorant of all of them, but was not, I think, suspicious, as she might have been. She talked, during most of my visit to her, in a full-bodied voice that was evidently music in her own ears, and though she plied me with questions she provided most of the answers to them herself. She wore a magenta gown, a violently checked shawl, and an enormous feathered hat, and sat with her knees wide apart and her elbows on them, smoking a clay pipe, while she talked to me. She was of massive form and highly equiline features, and looked every inch of her *a grand dame.*

" I met Lord McGillicuddy the last time the

Duke and I were up north," she said. "Of course you know him. A grand old man, is he not? The Master of McGillicuddy is on his way to Culbut now, with a flock of sheep, and if he arrives before we go out of town I shall ask a few friends to meet him, and I hope you will make one of the party, Mr. Howard. And, of course, dear Miriam, too. If he does not arrive in time we shall no doubt meet him, for we take the north road this summer, I am happy to say. There is always a great demand for wicker cradles on it; in the north they are more prolific than we are—as of course you know. I shall certainly tell him what a pleasure it has been to meet you, and get him to look you up. He will be able to support you if you have any more trouble with that tiresome Hezekiah Potter, who seems to think he can behave exactly as he pleases, and must, I am afraid, have given you a poor opinion of our pleasant little society here."

I assured her Grace, as seemed to be expected of me, that she herself had dissipated any unfortunate ideas I might have formed on that subject. She dismissed me with an agreeable smile, and an assurance of her continued support, for whatever it might be worth.

Miriam returned in the Duchess's van. She was a favourite with the Duke, who asked her

to sit up beside him, while he drove his old toastrack of a horse.

I walked with Edward, who was much disturbed in his mind over what had happened. He said that Potter's insolence was beyond all bearing, and he had been seriously considering whether it was not his filial duty to seek him out with a horsewhip and give him a sound thrashing.

"To think that my dear good old father should be subjected to the foul insults of such a man as that!" he said. "It positively makes my blood boil. On the one side you have a man whose whole being radiates self-sacrifice and benevolence, and on the other a wretched cur snarling at his heels. What am I to do, Howard? I don't want to be sent to prison, but upon my word I feel inclined to risk it for the pleasure of assaulting that scoundrel."

"I should treat him with the contempt he deserves," I said. "It is a case of dignity and impudence. Surely, your father's noble life speaks for itself! Nothing that you could do to such a contemptible person as Potter would make it shine with brighter effulgence."

He turned to me and wrung me warmly by the hand. The tears were in his eyes, and he was too much moved to speak for the moment. "Thank you for those words," he said presently,

in a low voice. "I am sure they were spoken from the heart, and I shall not forget them. There are few who are blessed with such fathers as mine, and I have the pleasure of feeling that he will soon be your father too, and that you will revere him as he deserves. Tell me, Howard, didn't that count with you, when you made up your mind to propose to my sister?"

"Well, perhaps I was thinking more about *her* at the time," I said. "But naturally I congratulate myself on the prospect of having such a father-in-law."

Edward was so taken up with the insult offered to his father that he did not notice as we came to the tramway terminus, from which the road to Magnolia Hall branched off, a newspaper placard on which were displayed the lines:

DISGRACEFUL BRAWL AT SOCIETY GATHERING.

WELL-KNOWN NAMES INVOLVED.

WHO IS MR. JOHN HOWARD?

Well, if that question was going to interest the inhabitants of Upsidonia, it seemed about time for me to be making arrangements for the modest competency that would enable me to leave the country.

CHAPTER XX

I WOKE up the next morning without that sense of something delightful about to happen to me to which I had grown accustomed since my arrival in Upsidonia, but soon brightened again as I laid my plans for acquiring an easy and immediate fortune. I knew that a rich man in Upsidonia would present me with twenty or thirty thousand pounds as readily as a poor man in England would allow me to present him with it, and would thank his lucky stars at finding a fool big enough to take it. I only had to find the rich man.

It seemed to me that I already knew who to apply to. I had made the acquaintance of a very rich man indeed, when I had gone district visiting with Mrs. Perry. His name was Hobson, and he had not always been as rich as he was at present. Mining speculations had ruined him. He could not touch a thing that turned out right. So sure as he bought shares in a mine that was supposed to have no gold in it, it turned out to be one of the richest ever heard of. And even silver played him false;

he had come his biggest cropper over a worked-out silver mine, in which antimony or some such metal was discovered the moment the shares seemed to be worth nothing, with the consequence that they had jumped up again to unheard of altitudes.

When the crash had come Mr. Hobson had put a bold face on it, and his wife had behaved nobly. She had given up the confined home in which she had been so happy without a murmur, and had bought every stick of furniture that she could cram into a large house. She had bought silks and laces, furs and jewels, for herself, and clothed her young children in the richest attire; and she had given up without flinching the household work in which she had taken such a delight, and engaged a large staff of servants. All Mr. Hobson's debtors had been allowed to pay him in full, and he and his family had retired to their mansion, with a name free of all reproach, it is true, but to such misery as only people of refinement could experience from such a change in their surroundings.

And that was not the worst. Mr. Hobson was a kind husband and an affectionate father. But he had the gambler's fever in his blood, and the hard lesson he had received had not sufficed to purge him of it. Since his downfall he had

continued to speculate, but with no greater success than before, and it was much to be feared that unless some help came to him, not only he, but his blameless wife and his innocent young children, would sink into yet deeper depths of degradation, and be obliged at last to go to the playhouse.

Mrs. Perry had come home one afternoon from a round of her district, full of the troubles of the Hobsons. Mr. Hobson had broken out again, and had risked a small fortune, not this time in mining, but in a patent for increasing the amount of petrol to be used in motor cars. His excuse was that he had some mechanical knowledge, and had spotted an error in the invention which he thought would make it useless. But, unfortunately, he had mentioned his discovery to others, the errors had been pointed out to the patentees, and they had succeeded in putting them right. Or, as was darkly hinted, there had been no error at all, and Mr. Hobson had fallen into a trap. But, in any case, he had had to realise at a high figure, and had come out of the deal more overloaded with wealth than ever.

We had all sympathised deeply over the picture of misery that Mrs. Perry had drawn. Mr. Hobson, she said, was overcome with remorse, and like a man distracted. He had

sat in his overfurnished dining-room with his head in his hands, while his wife, scintillating with diamonds, though it was early in the afternoon, had tried to comfort him, her face pale but full of courage. It had been almost insupportable to hear the children crying at the table loaded with provisions, and to think that the father, the bread-loser of the family, was powerless to help them.

"Cannot we do something for them, Samuel?" Mrs. Perry cried.

But her husband shook his head sadly, and said he was afraid not. "Hobson has himself to thank for it," he said, "and I fear he is incorrigible. If we were to take the burden of this mistake on our shoulders he would only make another one. The fact is, he is unfitted for business affairs. You can lose more money in the city than anywhere else, but you have to get up very early in the morning to do it, and the men who are successful at it, and lose large fortunes, are a good deal cleverer than poor Hobson."

I had offered then and there to look into the case and see if I could do anything to help. But although everybody said that it was very generous of me, they all tried to dissuade me from risking the small number of debts I already possessed. Edward did more. He rather

annoyed me by taking me aside and telling me that my duty was now towards Miriam, and that it would not be right for me to be charitable at her expense, which was what it would come to if I tried to straighten out the Hobsons' badly involved affairs.

But I had now made up my mind that nothing should stand in the way of my charitable instincts. I was not in a position to do much. I could not set the unfortunate Hobson on his feet again as a poor man. But I could go and see him, and come away leaving him a good deal poorer than he was before.

My heart glowed as I thought of the blessings I should call down upon my head from him and his sorely tried family. I should be almost in the position of a walking miracle, bringing relief that must have been despaired of. The warm gratitude of that unfortunate family would follow me wherever I went, even if I went out of Upsidonia, as I fully intended to do, after having relieved Mr. Hobson of part of his burden.

As I jumped out of bed I had already made up my mind. I would go and see him that very morning. When one has decided upon an errand of mercy one should lose no time in setting about it.

CHAPTER XXI

I GOT downstairs earlier than usual, and found Tom roaming about, with ten minutes or so on his hands before he went off to school.

He greeted me affably, for we were now very good friends. I had taught him to bowl "googlies," which were unknown in Upsidonian cricket before my arrival, and he had got into the first eleven of his school on the strength of it. He was properly grateful to me, and had quite forgiven me for my white flannel suit.

"I say, old boy," he said, "you've been going it! Biffed old Potter in the eye yesterday, didn't you?"

"I didn't biff him in the eye, Tom," I replied. "I rather wish I had. How do you know about it?"

"I read it in the paper. I can't show it to you because old Blother has taken it off into his pantry. But it said that Potter and you had had a scrap, and he said you were a fraud; and they don't think you come from the Highlands at all."

"Where *do* they think I come from?"

"They don't know, but they're going to find

out. They think it may have been you who committed the burglary."

"The burglary! What burglary?"

"Why, it was at Muffin's Rents, about a fortnight ago, just before you came. The people woke up and found a lot of family plate in the dining-room. A burglar had broken in in the night and left it there. A cheeky beggar he was too, for he had left them a bottle of Bass and half a game pie as well. I thought it was just the sort of sporting thing that you would have done."

"My dear Tom, I assure you I didn't. Why did they think it might have been me?"

"Well, they seemed to think you might have cleared out from some big house or other, because you were fed up with it, and got rid of your plate in that way."

"What a ridiculous idea!"

"Yes, it is rather. But I say, old boy, I wonder where you do come from."

I stared at him.

"Of course, I know you were a bit barmy before you came here, and don't remember anything about it," he went on to say. "It's a rummy thing altogether."

It seemed to me a very rummy thing that Tom should have any idea that I was supposed to have been what he called barmy.

"Who told you that?" I asked him.

"Oh, I heard them talking about it."

"Heard who talking about it?"

"Edward and old Blother. Old Blother said you seemed to be a very respectable young fellow, but he wasn't quite easy in his mind about your marrying Miriam, and he wanted to know more about you. He said you didn't talk like a Johnny from the Highlands. So then Edward said you didn't really remember where you had come from, and told him that you had been a bit touched in the upper story, but you were all right now."

"Well, I hope that satisfied Mr. Blother," I said, mentally confounding his impudence, and furious with Edward for publishing his silly idea, which I had only allowed him to hold because I thought he would keep it to himself.

"Oh, yes," said Tom. "He said if that was it, he supposed it was all right, and he shouldn't interfere unless he saw any further reason."

"Very kind of him indeed! Does anybody else know about this ridiculous idea of Edward's?"

"Oh, yes, everybody knows."

"What, Miriam?"

"Yes, she knows all right. I don't think she minds. I expect she thinks it's rather a

lark. But, I say, I must be getting off. Good-bye, old boy! don't forget you promised to bowl to me this afternoon."

When I went into breakfast Miriam greeted me as usual, and showed none of that shrinking that might have been expected from a girl in the face of a lover whom she had discovered to have been at one time what Tom called barmy; I was greatly relieved at this, though determined to have it out with Edward at the first opportunity.

When Mr. Blother had shaken hands with us all, and asked us how we had slept—little attentions which he never omitted—he expressed himself with great indignation at the line taken by the newspaper over the occurrence of the day before.

Apparently, Edward's explanation of any eccentricities of mine that had disturbed him had been quite satisfactory. Mr. Blother and I had always got on well together, and I was pleased to remember that only a few days before I had demanded of him a handsome tip, saying that I had been in the house for some time and was afraid that I had not given him much trouble. He was quite on my side, and expressed himself strongly about the impertinence of the newspaper in throwing doubt upon me.

"We shall have to announce the truth," he said, as he bustled about while the rest of the family took their seats. "Our young friend here set out to walk to Culbut, and either had a touch of sunstroke, or else forgot himself and became intoxicated—which would be reprehensible, but not altogether inexcusable in one of his youth—and cannot give an account of himself. No doubt his memory will come back, but until it does we must all stand together and protect him from these suspicions. If there is one thing that is quite clear, it is that he has never been a rich man. Although his accent is not quite what one would expect from a Highlander, I believe myself that he *is* one, because it was quite plain from the first that he had never seen a servant in his life, and had no idea of how to treat them. Now if you are all sure that you have everything that you want, I will go and get on with my work. Don't leave quite so much on your plates as you did yesterday, please—I don't mean you, Perry. And it is quite time that this ham showed more signs of wear."

With a cheery laugh Mr. Blother left the room, and Edward came in as he did so. He was generally up early, and had already been in to Culbut that morning.

He was in a state of considerable excitement,

but not over the affair that was in all our minds, which he put aside as of no account.

"Oh, that will all blow over," he said. "There is something far more serious now to engage peoples' attention."

We all looked at him expectantly. He was much agitated, and seemed at first incapable of speech. But when he had gulped down a little tea, he said in a voice vibrant with emotion: "This day will never be forgotten in Upsidonia. The social revolution has commenced."

We all looked towards Mr. Perry. It rested with him—the head of the family, and a man with a whole life of benevolent wisdom behind him—to indicate the line to be taken in face of this startling intelligence.

He kept his eyes fixed on his plate, but looked very grave, and shook his head slowly.

There was a moment's silence, and then he said: "It is an extraordinary thing that with all the improvements in communication we never can get our fish perfectly fresh. Mollie, will you take this away and give me some kidneys and bacon. I beg your pardon, Edward—you were saying——?"

Edward launched himself into an almost violent flood of speech. "I have felt it coming for a long time," he said. "I have done what I could to stem the tide, and to confine it in safe channels,

such as I knew you, dear father, would approve of. But the torrent has been too strong. It has broken through all the puny obstacles I have set up. We are now launched on its full flood, and heaven help those who are not to be found on the right side."

"My dear Edward, tell us what has happened," said Mrs. Perry. "You are keeping us on tenterhooks."

Edward calmed himself a little and said: "It is Mr. and Mrs. Bolster who have put the match to the powder. I am proud to call them friends of mine. The name of Bolster will ring through the ages as that of people who did not shrink from taking a foremost place in the battle of freedom. And I trust that the name of Perry will go down with it."

"Bolster is a very respectable fellow," said Mr. Perry. "I have nothing whatever to say against Bolster, except that he has always been rather a grumbler. But I do not want our name to ring through the ages with his, Edward. Bolster and Perry! It would not sound well.

"What have they done, Edward?" asked Mrs. Perry. "Nothing foolish, I hope."

"Last night," said Edward, consenting at last to be drawn into a plain story, "Bolster came home to find that the inspectors had paid his house a visit. It seems that the cook had given

information that the housekeeping bills had not been kept up to the level that the Bolsters are assessed upon. They made a scene with Mrs. Bolster, and refused to accept her explanation that her son, to whom she chiefly looked to help them in their meals, was away at Coxford, and the servants had all along refused to consume their proper share. The inspectors went away, and directed all the Bolsters' tradespeople to supply the house with double the quantity of goods ordered until further notice."

"They had no right to do that," said Mr. Perry. "They ought to have told Mrs. Bolster to do it, and left an inspector there to see that the goods were consumed. They have acted against the law."

"What do they care about the law?" exclaimed Edward bitterly. "The law in Upsidonia is for the poor, not for the rich. Bolster has taken the law into his own hands, and I am glad of it. I respect and honour him for his noble stand. When he came home and learnt what had happened, he threw every ounce of food in the house out into the garden. He did more than that. He is a big man, as you know, and he forced his butler to get up all the wine out of his cellar and pour it down the stable drains. The servants were in a terrible state of anger, but they could do nothing with him. He turned them out of the house neck and crop, and told

them they could go and complain to the police. He didn't care where they went or what they did. He stood up to them all, men and women. Then he barricaded all the doors and windows; but before he did so he threw out all the money in the house and all the plate. He is now shut up with Mrs. Bolster, and quite prepared to stand a siege. I hope that thousands will follow his example. It will be the end of this stifling tyranny. The rich will be able to breathe once more, and the selfish poor will have to shoulder their burdens and learn what misery they have inflicted so callously on their unfortunate fellow creatures."

"I am afraid Bolster will get into trouble," said Mr. Perry, calmly. "I should not mix myself up with it, Edward, if I were you. We must go on quietly in our own way, without setting class against class. The methods of anarchy are not for such as us. My dear, another cup of tea, if you please."

Edward choked down his emotion, and succeeded in making a fair breakfast. But I thought that in this matter he did not see eye to eye with his father. In his opinion the time for anarchy *had* come, and he was nerving himself to take a more prominent part in the struggle he saw coming than the more cautious and experienced Mr. Perry would approve of.

However, he gave us no hint of any intentions he may have formed while we were together, and directly he had finished his meal left the room.

CHAPTER XXII

I FOLLOWED Edward as soon as I could, for I had a crow of my own to pick with him.

But I found him quite unable to discuss anything but the startling and courageous behaviour of his friend, Mr. Bolster. He was going to his house at once, and I said that I would go with him.

Mr. Bolster lived in a large house not far from Magnolia Hall, and as we walked there I insisted upon Edward listening to my complaint.

"Well, what do you want me to do?" he asked impatiently. "You don't know where you come from, and I don't know either. My explanation is almost certainly the right one, and you *must* have some explanation of yourself ready. What are you complaining about?"

"I'm complaining of your having told Miriam that I am an escaped lunatic."

"My dear fellow, I'm pretty certain she suspected it. It was the nonsense you talked to her when you first came that made me tell her the truth. Now that she has the explanation she doesn't mind. No sensible girl would. She knows you are all right at present, and she'll see that you don't go wrong again."

I had to leave it at that. There was no satisfaction to be got out of the officious Edward.

Mr. Bolster's house was a pretentious building in the Italianate Gothic style, with Byzantine and other features. It stood in an extremely ugly garden, with asphalt paths, and stretches of grass cut up into beds of the shape of crescents, triangles, starfishes, Prince of Wales's feathers, interrogation marks, all elaborately planted to imitate carpets or rugs of the worst possible design. Wherever there was room for it, there was a large glass-house, and apparently Mr. Bolster had employed some of the hours of his self-imposed incarceration in throwing things at them; for there was hardly a pane within range that was left intact, and the ground about them was littered with lumps of coal and with the smaller articles of household furnishing, with which he, and possibly Mrs. Bolster, had missed their aim. The things with which they had been more fortunate were inside the glass-houses, which presented a picture of destruction that showed the seriousness of the battle now being waged.

Scattered about on the flower-beds, and on the grass near the house, was a curious assortment of articles, which included joints of meat, silver épergnes, brocaded cushions, cooking utensils, wearing apparel, pictures, clocks, and indeed

every article of luxury that such a house as this might contain.

We were not the only people who had come to gaze at this extraordinary scene. There was a well-dressed ill-mannered crowd hanging about and looking up at the shuttered windows; and more were driving up every minute. Many of them gathered round Edward, who was generally recognised, and gave him such items of news as they thought might interest him.

"You'll see 'im in a minute," said one excited gentleman. "'E put 'is 'ead out of that window just now. 'Ad a cock-shy at one of the bobbies, wiv a boot-tree. There it is."

"Have the police been here?" asked Edward. "Where are they now?"

"Gorn off to git some more. Lor lumme! it ain't 'arf a circus, is it?"

The opulent-looking overfed ladies and gentlemen around us seemed more amused than impressed with what was going on. But Edward's face was very grave. "Poor creatures!" he said aside to me. "They are hardly capable of taking anything seriously. They lead such terrible lives that anything is a distraction to them. When a chance of emancipation comes, they are too sunk in misery to take it."

They did not appear to me to be precisely sunk in misery, and but for their fine clothes and the

smart-looking equipages in which they had arrived, and which were now gathered round the gates waiting to take them away again, they were exactly like a careless, rather noisy London crowd, come out to see some fun.

As Edward was speaking there was a shout, and, looking up at a sort of Florentine balcony stuck on to a crenellated tower, I saw the now notorious Mr. Bolster, standing with his arms folded, surveying the crowd. He was in shirtsleeves, and had not brushed his hair. Possibly he had thrown all the brushes in the house at the conservatories.

The crowd cheered him, and he bowed repeatedly with an air of self-satisfaction, but presently held up his hand to command silence, and then made a short speech.

"Fellow men and fellow women," he said. "I've begun, and now it's for you to carry on. Down with servants! Down with luckshry! Down with the pore!"

The renewed cheers with which this stirring address was received caused Edward's eyes to brighten. "Their hearts are in the right place," he said. "They only want a leader." Then he raised his voice and shouted: "Three cheers for Bolster and his noble wife!"

The cheers were given, and Mrs. Bolster, attired in what I believe is called a peignoir,

appeared by the side of her husband and acknowledged them with him. Then both of them retired from the balcony.

Edward now set himself to turn the enthusiasm of the crowd in a practical direction. He did not address them collectively, but spoke to one here and there, and presently had round him a number of people who showed that they also recognised that Mr. Bolster's demonstration had sprung from a state of affairs intolerable to them as well as to him.

"Look 'ere, what do yer think of this?" asked one man. "Me and the missus was going to the theaytre, and my second coachman was adrivin' of us. Well, 'e took us round to where a old aunt of the cook's lived, and there we 'ad to set in the kerridge for 'alf an hour, while 'e yarned with 'er ladyship about a dinner-party they were giving in the servants' 'all, and 'oo was to be invited, and all such things as them. And 'er taking no more notice of us than if we wasn't there!"

"Yuss, it's just like 'em," said another. My groom of the chambers 'auled me over the coals the other day for not usin' up the stationery quicker. Blarst 'im and 'is stationery, I sez, and I'd a good mind to tell 'im so."

"Why didn't you?" asked Edward. "If you were all to make a stand against this tyranny to

which you are subjected, you could end it to-morrow. See what Bolster has done! It isn't all talk with him; it's action."

But, much as they no doubt approved of Bolster's bold stand, they seemed to shrink from taking any steps to follow his lead. Edward, who now began to go round among them with a note-book to take the names of those who were ready for concerted action, got more refusals than promises of support.

"What's the good?" asked one man. "They'll git 'old of Bolster all right, you'll see, and 'e'll be worse off than 'e was before. I ain't agoing to risk my luxurious 'ome, and run myself into trouble, not till I see a lot more of 'em chucking things about. It's all very well for Bolster. 'E ain't got a lot o' kids depending on 'im. A pretty thing if I was to leave mine to get through all the grub by themselves, while I was sent to chokey! 'Cos they don't let you order in no less. I've got a good appetite so far, and I can stand it better nor what they can."

That was the trouble with most of these long-suffering people. They were fighting their daily battle against profusion, not for themselves alone, but for dear ones dependent on them; and I could not find it in my heart to blame them for shrinking from throwing themselves into Edward's campaign.

But now there came a diversion. A butcher's cart drove up to the house, driven by an aristocratic-looking young man in a blue coat. Mr. Bolster appeared again on the Florentine balcony, and let down a basket, into which was put a large assortment of fleshy delicacies. These he hauled up. When he had collected them all around him, he held up four lamb cutlets for us to see, and handed them to his wife. Then he began to bombard the butcher with the rest of the lamb cutlets, sweetbreads, lumps of suet, and everything else that he had so carefully taken from him; and so accurate was his aim that the young man swung off down the drive, shielding his well-greased head with his arm, and exhibiting every sign of resentment. When he was out of range, he pulled up and addressed Mr. Bolster most injuriously, threatening him with all sorts of penalties. But the crowd, heartened by the exhibition, jeered at him, and presently he drove away.

He had no sooner gone than the performance was repeated with a grocer, then with a poulterer, and at intervals with other tradespeople. Mr. Bolster kept the minimum of sustenance for himself and his wife, and used everything else as a projectile; and I think he must have gone rather short afterwards, for he was evidently enjoying himself, and seemed to keep back very little.

Whilst the various tradespeople were thus being ignominiously driven off the field, the coachmen and footmen and chauffeurs, who were waiting in full view of what was happening, not only took no part in the fray, but affected to ignore it completely.* They showed, however, a mild degree of interest, and there was a considerable stir amongst the now rapidly increasing crowd, as a squad of police marched on to the ground, and with them seven or eight men and women in the dress of indoor servants. It presently appeared that these had come, not to insist upon being taken back again, or to demand their wages, which, no doubt, they were pleased to go without, but to get such clothes as they wanted from the house.

But Mr. Bolster was ready for them. Whenever they congregated somewhere to make an entrance, he appeared at a window above them, and poured down water on their heads. And the police, who had evidently come to put an end to the whole business, were no more successful in forcing a way into the house. The lower part was built to resemble a mediæval prison, and stout iron bars and massive oak met them everywhere and defied their efforts.

At last they marched off, drenched to the skins to get reinforcements ; but the inspector in charge

*See Note.

of them remained, and in an authoritative voice ordered the crowd to disperse.

The crowd, now greatly encouraged by Mr. Bolster's determined resistance, refused to do so, though it showed a disposition to avoid the inspector's eye ; and he got angry, and threatened to make arrests when his men returned.

He came up to Edward and said : " I would advise you not to mix yourself up in this, Mr. Perry. I mean business, and if you are here when my men come back, it will be my duty to arrest you first of all."

Edward hesitated a moment, and then turned abruptly on his heel and walked off. I followed him, and he said as we went down the drive : " I shan't shirk being arrested when the time comes, but it will be for something more serious than refusing to move on when I am told to."

As we left the garden I turned back and saw Mr. Bolster showering from an upper window articles of feminine apparel, which, floating amply down the breeze, roused the crowd to renewed merriment.

As we walked away, Edward said contemptuously: "Isn't that just like the race of servants all over? To come back for their *things!* Despicable race of parasitical humbugs! If I were ever so poor I should be ashamed of going out to service. I would sooner be the man who can hardly rise from his chair through over-feeding, than the man who busies himself in seeing that he consumes more than his share. The one is at any rate trying to do his duty, with all the forces of poverty and oppression ranged against him; the other merely wants to live in rich surroundings without undergoing any of the disadvantages."

"I have rather suspected that," I said. "Still, they do live simply, as far as I have observed. They are not like Lord Charles Delagrange, and that sort of person, who likes luxury for its own sake."

"I am not at all sure that some of them don't," said Edward. "But, at any rate, they all enjoy the contrast between their state and that of their masters and mistresses. You have no idea what

servants are, Howard, by only knowing them at Magnolia Hall. Would you like to come with me to a few houses where, I think, I may get recruits for this movement? You will see then what the servants of the rich are really like."

It was still early in the morning, and I did not want to call on Mr. Hobson until later, so I accepted Edward's invitation. "But I hope you are not going to run yourself up against the law," I said. "Your father won't like that, nor any of your family."

"My dear Howard," said Edward obstinately, "I am a reformer. Now the opportunity has come I must not be found wanting."

The first house we called at was a smaller one than either Magnolia Hall or Mr. Bolster's palace-prison-fortress. Edward told me that it was the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Slabb, who suffered much under the tyranny of a houseful of female servants. He had strong hopes that they could be worked up to revolt.

As we walked up the garden path, we observed some of the furniture grouped awkwardly round the front door, and had to pick our way through a barricade of chairs before we reached it, and rang the bell.

It was answered by an elderly maid, with her head tied up in a duster, and a broom in her hand. She did not look at all pleased to see us, and said

at once: "We can't admit any callers to-day. The downstairs rooms are being turned out."

Then she recognised Edward, and said more amiably: "Oh, it's you, Mr. Perry! If you have come district-visiting, I don't so much mind. They're in bed. We can't have them about when we are busy. Perhaps you and your friend would like to go up and sit with them for half an hour. Poor things, they'll be glad of a little company. We can't expect them to enjoy these turning-out days as much as we do."

She led the way upstairs, and Edward threw an expressive look at me as we were shown into a large bedroom, where Mr. and Mrs. Slabb were lying side by side in a large bed, with a breakfast tray on a table by their side.

"Here is Mr. Perry come to see you, with a friend," said the maid. "You'll be glad to have a little chat. We're getting on very well downstairs, but I'm afraid you won't be able to get up to-day, as we have decided to have all the carpets beaten, and I'm not certain we shan't have the sweep in to-morrow. But I mustn't stand here talking."

She took the breakfast tray and went out of the room, and the old lady and gentleman brightened up a good deal as Edward sat down and began to talk to them.

"We do so 'ate these days in bed," said Mrs.

Slabb pathetically, " and they won't even let us 'ave no books to read, because Augusta likes to arrange them all in colours on the shelves downstairs, and she won't 'ave 'em took out. It do seem rather 'ard, don't it ? "

When I heard of this " turning-out " process taking place regularly twice a week—once for the downstairs rooms and once for the upstairs—and that each floor took one whole day, and sometimes more, I thought it *was* rather hard. Mr. and Mrs. Slabb kept four maids, all demons for cleanliness and order. Sunday was the only day on which they could count, with certainty, on not being kept in bed or confined to one room downstairs; and even then they were only allowed to sit on certain chairs, and might not amuse themselves in any way, for the four maids were strict Sabbatarians.

But in spite of their much-hampered life neither Mr. nor Mrs. Slabb received with any favour Edward's invitation to them to dismiss the whole of their household and join the revolt of the masters and mistresses. Their faces grew longer and longer as he described the battle already joined.

" They are very good to us on the 'ole," said Mrs. Slabb. " We are more like friends than mistress and servants—not like some. Sometimes they even asks us to sit with them in the kitchen

on Sunday evenings and sing 'ymns. I shouldn't like to do nothink to offend them. And Augusta's 'ad trouble, too. Her 'usband took and run off with 'is master's daughter, when they was butler and cook together in a big 'ouse. No, Mr. Perry, I shouldn't like to seem ungrateful to them. And, after all, it *is* nice to 'ave your 'ouse lookin' as clean as a new pin, always, ain't it? It's worth givin' up somethink for."

"P'raps they'll let us get up for a little this afternoon and 'ave a walk in the garden," said Mr. Slabb, hopefully. "The carpets was beat only las' week, and they can't take so long. We'd be careful not to get in the way."

As Edward said afterwards, what could you do with people like that? They hugged their chains.

In one of the houses we visited we came across a man who had suffered a great disappointment. He had seen an advertisement of somebody's self-digesting food, and had ordered in a large supply of it. But his idea that it would digest itself if you left it alone long enough had turned out to be erroneous, and his servants were forcing him to go through the preliminary process of swallowing it.

He joined Edward's league.

In was in the larger houses that Edward gained the few adherents that were the meagre result of the morning's visiting. Most of these houses were

so crammed with furniture and foolish and tasteless ornaments that it was almost impossible to move in them, for their owners were compelled to go on buying. I noticed that Edward's mention of Mr. Bolster's glorious breaking of glass had more effect than any of his arguments. I would mark the eyes of the man—it was nearly always a man to whom he was speaking—brighten, as he looked furtively round the room, and fed his imagination on one glorious crowded ten minutes, in which he would demolish every detested article around him. And indeed one gentleman, in a vast saloon containing several hundreds of china and glass ornaments, began then and there. We left him whooping with joy as he made a determined onslaught on them with a poker.

Edward was frankly disappointed at the result of his campaign. "What is the good of trying to help them?" he asked. "They will not help themselves. I sometimes ask myself if most of them really desire to be poor, and to gain all the benefits of character that come from poverty."

"Probably not," I replied. "If you were to take away the obligation of over-stuffing themselves with food and their houses with furniture, and give them servants they could order about, I should think they would consider themselves well-off."

"I am afraid you are right," said Edward, with

a sigh. " I verily believe that if we had offered to take money from all the people we have visited, instead of asking them to bestir themselves to gain their own freedom, our morning would have been a triumphant success."

" Well, shall we try ? " I suggested. " There is still time."

But Edward scoffed at the idea of mere indiscriminate charity. " It would only be tinkering at the disease," he said. " I want to cure it."

CHAPTER XXIV

EDWARD now announced his intention of going in to Culbut to call on a Cabinet Minister of advanced Radical views.

"I have great hopes of him," he said. "The poor hate him, because they say he is trying to foist property on to them by removing their taxes one after the other, and piling them on the rich, and that if he goes on in this way much longer he will wreck the Constitution, and that that is really what he wishes to do. They say he is on the side of capital because he has none himself; but, as a matter of fact, he has sprung from the rich, and has a very tender heart for their sufferings; I have often heard him say so. If he will put himself at the head of this movement its success will be assured."

I wished Edward good luck, and when I had seen him safely round the corner set out to find Mr. Hobson's house.

According to Upsidonian ideas, this unfortunate man had certainly been brought to a pass of great misery. He lived in a large and handsome mansion surrounded by some acres of ground, and kept up an imposing establishment.

I was shown into a library very richly furnished,

but in far better taste than any of the rooms I had been in on my visits that morning. The effect was somewhat spoiled to my eye by a plain deal-topped table and three or four Windsor chairs, which were mixed up with the rest of the furniture; but tears came into my eyes—or should have done—when I reflected that these were probably the few articles that Mr. Hobson had been able to save from the wreck of his fortunes, and must be very dear to him as reminders of his former simple and happy life. Probably they would have to go soon, for he would not be able to take up room with them which might be filled with more expensive articles.

I was sitting in one of the Windsor chairs when Mr. Hobson came into the room. He was a dejected-looking man of middle age, with refined features and courteous manners, and my heart leapt as I thought of the solace I was about to bring to his over-burdened mind.

"Mr. Hobson," I said, coming at once to the point, "I have heard your sad story, and I have come to offer you some small relief. I am prepared to accept from you the sum of twenty-thousand pounds, and I hope that with this assistance you will be able to make a fresh start and get free of your difficulties."

His thin face, already beginning to fill out from the course of high feeding to which he had been

brought, flushed eagerly, and his eyes brightened, but sank immediately to their previous unhappy dullness.

"You are very kind, Mr. Howard," he said, "but I am beyond help, I fear. I could not hold out any hope of asking you to repay me. My spirit is broken. Nothing goes right with me. A week ago I might have accepted such relief, and promised to take back the money when times were brighter. But they will never be brighter for me. I could not even use the interest you would pay me for a sum of twenty thousand pounds."

"But I don't want to pay the money back, and I don't want to pay any interest," I assured him. "I am not a money borrower. I have a good deal less than I know what to do with, and nothing will give me greater pleasure than to receive twenty thousand pounds, or even thirty thousand, as a free gift from you. We should keep the transaction entirely to ourselves, and nobody outside need know anything about it at all."

He stared at me in amazement, and then suddenly broke down altogether, and sobbed. "Oh, it is too much!" he cried. "Who are you, that you come as a messenger of hope, when nothing but ruin and darkness seemed to surround me? And why do you do it?"

These were rather awkward questions. "Never mind that," I said. "Everybody has

his own axe to grind, and I assure you that you will oblige me as much as I shall oblige you by presenting me with twenty thousand pounds, or even thirty thousand, as I said. Yes, we will make it thirty thousand. You shall write me a cheque at once—to bearer—and I will go straight to the bank and get the money."

When I had overcome his resistance, which wasted a lot of time, he told me that he could not write me a cheque as every penny that came in was re-invested at once, in a mad effort to lose it. "But if you are really serious," he said, "I can give you stocks and shares to the amount you so generously mention, and you can realise on them, or keep them on the chance of going down if you like, which they might do for you but will never do for me."

I was a little disappointed, but it made it easier for me in one way, for I could pretend that I hoped the securities would show a downward movement; and it also made it easier for him. Before we had completed our business, Mr. Hobson had almost persuaded himself that he was doing me a good turn in presenting me with the shares, which he said were bound to lose me a large fortune if I could hold on to them long enough; and I encouraged him to believe that I *should* hold on to them with that end in view.

It ended in my accepting thirty-five thousand one pound shares in the Mount Lebanon gold mine, the purchase of which had been the chief cause of Mr. Hobson's downfall.

"I bought them at a low figure," he said. "I had been told that the reef would peter out immediately. But I had no sooner bought them than they found another still richer one, and they have been paying forty per cent ever since. They now stand at about eighty shillings, but I do believe that the end is in sight, and they may come down with a run any day. If only I could have stuck to them! But, oh, Mr. Howard, how can I ever thank you? With this burden removed, I shall be able to right myself by degrees. I shall be a new man."

He looked it already. His eyes sparkled, and he held his head erect. But when he suggested calling his wife to thank me for all I had done, I rose and said I must be going.

"Now it is understood that nobody knows about this," I said. "And please don't thank me any more. I know what I am doing, and I assure you I am very pleased to have these Mount Lebanons."

I shook hands with him, and got out of the house as quickly as he and the servants would let me.

I was a little frightened by what I had done.

After intending to accept only twenty thousand pounds, I had promised to take over shares worth about seven times that amount, if I realised on them at their present figure ; and I knew that I should be considered to have committed an act of sheer lunacy if it came to the ears of Mr. Perry or Edward. Besides, I could hardly get used to the idea all at once that I had suddenly become a rich man, and feared some stroke of fate that would, after all, deprive me of my well-gotten wealth.

I had had to give Herman Eppstein's name as the stockbroker who would arrange the transfer, as he was the only one I knew. There was some risk that he would give me away, but I thought I should be able to impose secrecy on him, as he had not struck me as a man of much independence of character. At any rate, I must risk it. I decided to call on him that afternoon, and now made my way back to Magnolia Hall for luncheon.

CHAPTER XXV

An unpleasant surprise awaited me. I was informed by Mr. Blother, who came in answer to my ring at the bell, while I waited by the open door,* that Lord Potter had called while I was out, with an inspector of police, for the purpose of taking my finger-prints, and would return sometime in the afternoon.

"What infernal impudence!" I said, as Mr. Blother showed me into the morning-room, preparatory to informing Mrs. Perry that I had returned. "I certainly shan't stay in."

"Oh, but you must," he said, "or they can have you up. Potter is dying to get at you. I gave him a piece of my mind this morning, but I can't say that it made much impression on him. I know Potter of old; we were at the university together. He is arrogance personified. He pretended not to know me this morning, and asked me a lot of questions about my master and mistress—as to how they spent their money, and whether there was any difficulty about keeping up the household bills to the proper figure. I told him plainly that if he had taken on the job of

* See page 67.

an inspector he had no right to come without his uniform, and if he hadn't the accounts of this house were no affair of his. The impudence of his pretending that he thought the Perrys were ordinary rich people whose house he could go in and out of just as it pleased him! I would not even take his name into them, and he went away without having got much change out of *me*. You stand up to him when he comes this afternoon. Satisfy the police that you had nothing to do with the burglary, and don't let him see that you are annoyed with him for putting them on to you. You will score off him best if you ignore him altogether. Well, I will tell Mrs. Perry that you are here. Mr. Howard, is it not? I don't think you gave me a card."

When the necessary formalities had been gone through, and I had taken my place at the luncheon table, I asked what right Lord Potter had to accompany the police in their duties, and to make himself obnoxious to anyone whom he happened to dislike.

"None," said Mr. Perry emphatically.

But Mrs. Perry said: "Well, he is a member of the House of Lords. As such, he might consider it his duty to look into anything that he thought was going wrong."

"As a member of the House of Lords," said Mr. Perry, didactically, "he has a share in making

laws which we all have to obey. It is not part of his duty to administer them."

"I beg your pardon," said Lord Arthur. "I don't like Potter, but I must stand up for him there. It *is* his duty as a member of the ruling class to interest himself in public behaviour. The House of Lords has been shorn of much of its powers, but the influence of its members remains."

"As the son of a peer, my dear Arthur," said Mr. Perry, "you are quite right to stand up for your order, and if every peer were like your father there would be no objection to their claiming such rights as Lord Potter, for instance, claims—to have free entry into every house, in order that he may satisfy himself that its occupants are behaving themselves as they should do. But we are a democratic country, and, as things stand now, such a claim as that must be resisted, however reasonable it may have been a hundred years ago."

"I don't know that I altogether agree with you there, Perry," said Mr. Blother. "I admit that it is intolerable that such a man as Potter should force an entrance into *your* house, however you may choose to live. But you would hardly object to a peer entering the establishment of a man, let us say, like Bolster—an admitted member of the lower classes."

"Edward would," said Tom. "He said the

other day that however rich a man was he ought to be free from interference in his own house."

"Oh, but Edward is an advanced Socialist," said Lord Arthur. "He would deny that a peer was any better than anybody else."

"You would not go so far as to say, I suppose," said Mr. Blother, still addressing Mr. Perry, and at the same time handing him a mayonnaise of salmon, "that the House of Lords did not know what was good for the people—the common people, I mean—better than they know themselves?"

"I should deny," said Mr. Perry, "that each member of the peerage knew better than each member of the proletariat what was best for him."

"If that is the case," said Lord Arthur, in some excitement, "I beg to give you a month's notice, Mr. Perry. I can cope with Edward, but if *you* are going to preach revolutionary views it is time I looked out for another situation. I only took service here because my father said that your political views were sound at bottom, although you went farther than he approved of in many ways."

"Oh, dear Lord Arthur!" said Mrs. Perry in her pleasant sensible voice, "you know that you mustn't take everything that my husband says literally. I am sure that he only means that

peers who have no official position should be careful how they exercise their rights over other people."

"Quite so," said Mr. Perry, and went on to explain that noblemen like Lord Blueberry, who accepted a post under Government, even if it were not actually one of inspection, were going the right way to work.

"As a postman," he said, "Victor Blueberry gains entrance to all the houses on his round in a way that cannot upset anybody, and none of those whom he visits can object to his making any investigations that he may wish to make, in the course of his duty, on their way of living. And the same is true of Hugh Rumborough, when he takes round their greens, although he is not in so strong a position because he is not an official. I only say that with the onward march of democracy it is no longer wise for a peer to pursue his investigations harshly."

This seemed to satisfy Lord Arthur, who withdrew his notice, and left the room for a time to compose himself.

Later on, when Mr. Blother had also left us to ourselves, Mr. Perry said: "Of course one has to be careful how one expresses one's self before Arthur. He doesn't see that what may be unobjectionable in certain cases would be indefensible if it were acted upon everywhere. At

one time a peer of the realm had the right to make his will prevail over everybody beneath his own rank; but the right has fallen into disuse, and is now only exercised in the case of those who are not in a position to resent it. Arthur would, no doubt, admit that it would be an intolerable state of affairs if *any* peer took to interfering with *any* commoner, whatever position he might hold; and that if it were done to any extent, the right would have to be taken away. It is only by exercising it carefully, and, as I say, on those who are not in a position to resent it, that the peers can expect to keep it at all."

"Then I understand," I said, "that Lord Potter, as a peer, really has the right to come and interfere with me, although he holds no official position."

"If you refuse to acknowledge his right," said Mr. Perry, "as *I* certainly do, if he tries to force himself into this house he will not find any tribunal in the country that will punish you for it."

Miriam and I went into her garden after luncheon. When we had shut the gate and were alone together in that green and shady retreat, I took her sweet face between my hands and kissed it.

"They have been saying all sorts of things about me," I said. "Do you believe them?"

She looked me straight in the eyes, and laughed.

"What, that you are not quite right in your head?" she asked.

"Well, that was Edward's idea. Blother inclines to the opinion that I was drunk."

"Mr. Blother is a very silly old man," said Miriam, "and dear old Edward is so taken up with his own affairs that one need never pay much attention to what *he* says. But, John—truly now—you are not teasing me about England? You *can* find your way there and it *is* as nice as you say it is?"

"Of course I can find my way there. I only wish I could go and find it now, this minute, and take you with me."

She sighed. We were now sitting on the garden seat. "I almost wish you could," she said. "I should like to get off all the bother of the wedding. I dread that more than anything."

"Why?" I asked, in some surprise. "I thought everything was going to be as simple as possible."

"Well, father says now that he thinks we *must* have a rich wedding, and ask all our friends amongst the lower classes. I should like them to come, of course, because a lot of them are real friends; but I do hate the idea of a regular rich wedding."

"Why does your father think we ought to have one?" I asked. "He seemed to be pleased that

I wasn't a man like Eppstein, and that you were marrying into your own class."

"Yes, but he says there will be such a lot of talk if we only have our poor friends. People are always saying that he isn't really in sympathy with the rich at all. Of course it isn't true, but if we had a rich wedding, and invited all the rich people and gave them presents, it would show that he does think more of them than just of pleasing our poor relations."

"Should we have to give them presents—expensive ones?"

"Yes. They are awfully good. Lots of the women in mother's district have promised to take jewels. They are quite excited about my marriage, and would like to see me settled as poorly provided for as possible. Perhaps it wouldn't be fair to disappoint them. But I do hate it so."

"Well, so do I," I said. "And I should hate to give away a lot of presents to people who had never done me any harm."

"Dear old boy!" she said affectionately. "Mother rather hates the idea of it too. But she feels, perhaps, that we *ought* to think of our rich friends at a time like this."

"Miriam," I said, boldly, "we can't face it. Let us go away together and get married quietly when we get to England."

The idea seemed to strike her as something

rather dreadful and rather pleasing at the same time. She blushed, but her eyes were bright.

"Oh, we couldn't," she said.

"Yes, we could. Let us go away in a week's time, before all the fuss begins, and escape it."

"It really would be rather fun!" She was half joking, half in earnest, but, at any rate, she had admitted the idea into her mind, and gradually as I pressed her, making light of all difficulties, she began to waver towards acquiescence, in earnest. What her mother would think was the chief obstacle.

"I am sure she would be just as relieved as we should at escaping all the bother," I said. "You could leave her a letter."

"I could come back and see her after we were married."

"Yes, of course. We would come back to Upsidonia whenever we wanted some more—I mean whenever you wanted to. Oh, Miriam, say yes!"

She did not say yes at once, but she did a little later. She had a great sense of adventure, and became even excited at the prospect, when she had once consented to it. We decided to go away together very early in the morning in a week's time.

CHAPTER XXV

As long as I remained in Miriam's garden, I was safe from interruption. If the police had been waiting to arrest me for a crime, they could not have got at me, or even summoned me from outside, but must have waited until I chose to appear.

But when we had made our plans together, I thought I had better go and see if they had called again, and, if they had, give them my finger-prints and get it over.

When Miriam and I left her garden and shut the gate behind us, the first thing we saw was the ragged figure of Lord Potter, who was shuffling about with his shoulders hunched up and his hands in his pockets, looking at the flower-beds. Hovering about at some little distance from him was Mollie, who made excited signs in our direction when she saw us.

Lord Potter saw us at the same time, and came across the lawn with a very disagreeable expression on his dirty face. "The police are waiting for you up at the house, sir." he said. "It is just like you to take refuge in a lady's garden.

But if you think you are going to escape me this time you are much mistaken. Off with you at once! I am not in a mood to be kept waiting any longer."

He held out his hand towards the house with a commanding gesture, and I was just about to reply to him, not altogether pacifically, when Miriam's clear young voice broke in.

"Mollie!" she called, and when Mollie came to her, she said: "Run at once and fetch Mr. Hobbs and Sir Herbert. Tell them that there is someone in the garden who has no right to be here."

Mollie ran off, and Lord Potter's face darkened. "Do you know who I am, Miss Perry?" he asked haughtily. "But of course you do. What is the meaning of this strange behaviour?"

Miriam turned her shoulder to him, and taking my arm led me towards the house.

Lord Potter shuffled after us, and said angrily: "Answer me, please! What do you mean by treating me in this way?"

He was on the other side of Miriam, and his unsavoury presence was nearer to her than I cared for. I let go of her arm, and pushed in between them.

"Keep your distance," I said, and trod by mistake—at least—well, trod will do—on his toe.

My boots were new and strong, and his were in the last stages of consumption. With a cry of

rage and agony, he took the damaged foot in his hand, and hopped about on the other, while he vented on me a flood of violent abuse.

At that moment Mr. Hobbs and Sir Herbert appeared on the scene. Miriam stopped and said: "My father has refused to have this man in the house, and we have just found him walking about in the garden. Will you please put him outside the gate?"

Lord Potter faced them. "If you dare lay a finger on me," he began——

But Mr. Hobbs, who thought there was nobody in the world like Miriam, and would have turned an emperor out of the garden if she had asked him, laid a large hand on his shoulder, and said: "I don't know who you are, but you get out of my garden."

Sir Herbert laid his hand on the other shoulder, and between them they shifted Lord Potter towards the drive, faster than was altogether convenient to him.

He was so taken aback by this treatment that at first he could only expostulate violently. But as it continued he began to resist, and then Sir Herbert, who was an athletic young man, took him by the collar with one hand and the seat of his trousers with the other, and ran him forcibly across the lawn.

The sight was so comic that I burst out laugh-

ing. Mollie did the same, jumping and clapping her hands with delight, and Miriam was not long in following suit. I was delighted to think that Lord Potter could not possibly help hearing us. The crowning point of the scene was when Tom, who had a half-holiday that afternoon, ran out of the house with a hand camera, and succeeded in taking two snapshots of the progression before it ended at the gate.

Sir Herbert came back grinning, and said: "I have owed his lordship one for a long time. When I was a boy at school, he got me a swishing for pea-shooting at him."

As for Lord Potter, he went off down the Culbut Road, without once turning back; and if ever a man looked like making mischief, he did.

The affair with the police was soon over. I put on a dignified air, and did all that they asked me to do without making any difficulty about it. They were actually apologetic before they left, and I was not surprised when they told me that they had already found and arrested the man who had committed the burglary, and that it was only because Lord Potter had insisted that they had worried me over the matter at all. They had been quite sure all along that I could have had nothing to do with it.

"Lord Potter knew that as well as you did," I said. "I rather wonder—if I may be permitted

to say so—that you should have lent yourselves to pay off his scores."

They looked a little foolish at that, and one of them said : " We shall not act on his instructions again. Lord Potter is, no doubt, a very important personage, but he must not think that he can make use of our service for his private ends."

" I have just seen him doing the frog's march out of the garden," I said, " and I expect when you get back you will find him there, wanting to have some arrests made for assault. He looked like that, as far as I could judge from his back. You might tell him that photographs were taken of him, in a position not calculated to add lustre to his name, if they came to be published. It might be worth his while not to take any further steps."

The policemen laughed and went away. Whether they gave Lord Potter the hint or not, neither Mr. Hobbs nor Sir Herbert heard anything further of their treatment of him.

Later in the afternoon I called on Herman Eppstein at his office, and arranged for the transfer of the Mount Lebanon shares. He looked grave when I told him what a large block of them I had taken over, and said that there had been a distinct upward movement in Mount Lebanons during the last few days."

" I'm afraid you have bought at a very bad

time," he said. "I wish you had consulted me first. I could 'ave put you on to a better spec than that. You may get badly 'it. And whatever made you take all your eggs out of one basket? Why, you'll make a fortune if these 'ere shares do go up, and what'll the family say to that, eh?"

"I know what I'm doing," I said stiffly. "And I'll ask you to remember that I'm consulting you professionally, and in confidence. I should naturally not have come to you if I had had any fear that you would so far forget yourself as to blab of business outside your office. No gentleman would allow himself to do such a thing."

That touched him. "Well, I 'ope I know 'ow to be'ave like a gentleman," he said in an injured voice. "Nothing that's said in this room by a client goes outside it."

"Oh, I knew I was safe enough with you, really," I said carelessly. "I have proved that by coming here."

Then I gave him my instructions about selling the shares on a certain date, speaking as if I had information as to some favourable movement likely to take place before then; and impressed him somewhat with my air of inside knowledge. I left him fairly confident that he would not give me away.

The day I had fixed on for selling was the day before Miriam and I had arranged to leave the country together. I should realise my comfortable fortune, and Herman Eppstein might say what he liked about it afterwards.

CHAPTER XXVI

We sat down to dinner that evening without Edward, but nobody expressed any anxiety about him, as his philanthropic enterprises often detached him from the family circle. I said nothing about our visits of the morning, as I thought that Mr. and Mrs. Perry would be disturbed if they knew that he was taking part in fanning the agitation amongst the masters and mistresses of Culbut.

The evening papers were full of it. Mr. and Mrs. Bolster were still in a state of siege, and it seemed unlikely that they would be dislodged unless the authorities prevailed on their various tradespeople to stop their supplies. Considering Mr. Bolster's treatment of them, I should have thought this would not be difficult, but it was explained to me that if they did not supply a customer with goods ordered by him, they not only had those goods left on their hands, but had to receive payment for them as well. Consequently, they would not consent to starve out Mr. and Mrs. Bolster unless they were indemnified against gain by the police; but probably that would be done in a day or two. In the meantime,

Mr. Bolster was having the time of his life, and providing splendid copy for the papers.

I learnt, from the papers that Mr. Perry had brought home, and from his reports of what he had heard, that the movement had gathered a good deal more way than I should have thought possible from my experiences of the morning. Quite a number of rich people had followed Mr. Bolster's example, had turned out their servants, shut themselves up in their houses, and thrown things out of the windows. In some cases the servants had successfully resisted them, and had turned them out of their own houses. But it was doubtful whether this was altogether a wise step on their part, because, in the first place, it was an illegal action, and gave the masters and mistresses a legitimate grievance, and in the second it left them free to go about and stir up further trouble.

Mr. Perry shook his head over the whole business. "It is the result," he said, "of last year's phenomenal harvest. There has been great distress amongst the rich ever since. Food has dropped in price, and many families are feeling the pinch of prosperity who have got along very well so far. Unfortunately, this year seems likely to be an even more prosperous one than last. I much fear that we are at the commencement of a prolonged period of social unrest. But it is a

bad look-out if it is going to be met in this way. The people who are taking the law into their own hands will not really better themselves in the long run, and they will get many more into trouble who are innocent of all offence."

"I cannot find it in my heart to blame them much," said Mrs. Perry. "No-one who has not gone about amongst them as I have can form any idea of what they have to suffer. One would have to have a hard heart not to wish to help them."

"There are many of us who are trying to help them," said Mr. Perry. "If everybody in the country would live only half as well as we do, there would be no problem of wealth at all."

"And you have proved," I said boldly, "that one can live in easy surroundings without losing anything in character, and without depriving oneself of any legitimate pleasure in life."

But this statement was received well by nobody. Mr. Perry said that I had probably been deceived by the cheerfulness with which he confronted the trials of his life, and asked me if I really thought he enjoyed the luxuries to which he subjected himself. Mrs. Perry said quietly that I did not know how much their way of living cut them off from their friends. Miriam said nothing, but looked at me warningly, as if I were in danger of letting out our secret. Mr. Blother said that I didn't know what I was talking about. And

Lord Arthur said pointedly that when people stayed in rich houses, and were always trying to sneak their work from the servants by doing things for themselves, it was only natural that they should hold silly views on the question.

"This preposterous movement," said Mr. Blother, "ought to have been nipped in the bud. I think, before we see the end of it, Perry, you will be rather sorry that you have taken such pains to improve the treatment of prisoners. Give all these lunatics a year or two's dose of such luxury as they have never dreamt of, and they will be glad enough to get back to their own homes, and settle down quietly to do what their servants tell them."

"If you were to shoot a few of them it would be more to the point," said Lord Arthur vindictively. "Brutes!"

Edward did not return until late that night, and came into my room to tell me what had happened. He was so exalted that he could not sleep without unburdening himself, and what he had to tell was interesting enough to keep me awake for as long as he liked to stay talking.

The movement was fairly launched. The Cabinet Minister upon whom he had called had told Edward that he was then and always on the side of the rich, but there were reasons, which he would not waste valuable time by recounting, why

he could not put himself at their head in the present revolt. So they had had to do without him, but had been so successful that his leadership would hardly be missed.

"He will come in all right by and by, when he sees how strong the agitation is," said Edward, "but not as leader. He has missed *that* chance, and will be sorry for it. We have done an immense amount of work already. We have formed a Masters' and Mistresses' Union, and have already got a surprising number of adherents. To-morrow we expect to more than double our figures, and before the week is out I believe we shall be strong enough to resort to peaceful picketing. Some of the younger men, who have not yet lost their muscle through luxurious living, will be told off for that purpose, and it will be surprising if they cannot induce many to join us who are still timidly holding off."

"Are the servants going to take united action?" I asked.

"They look to the Government to help them," said Edward. "It came in a year ago on the cry of 'Work for All,' and their view is that it is bound to see that they get work. They are at present merely scandalised at finding that their victims are determined to throw off the yoke, and, moreover, are strong enough to do it. They will be more scandalised still, to-morrow, and very soon

there will be so many of them without situations that they will be forced to take some steps. But in the meantime we shall organise—organise; and by the time they wake up to do the same we shall be too strong for them. My dear fellow, you have come to Culbut at a glorious moment. The vile structure of tyranny is tottering to its base, and before you are many days older you will see it topple over and sink into the dust, never more to be revived."

"That will be very interesting," I said. "You don't think that the police will be strong enough to scotch the movement, before it grows?"

"It has grown beyond that already. They can't even get at Bolster. If they had been able to arrest him at the start, they might have intimidated the rest. But there must be some scores of people who have barricaded themselves into their houses to-night, and thrown all their surplus goods out of the window. They can't deal with them all; there aren't enough of them to do it. No; we have already got to the point at which we can make terms. Very soon we shall be strong enough to dictate them. Oh, my dear Howard, I can't tell you what I feel about it. I feel inclined now, at this moment, to throw every article of value in this room out of the window."

"Oh, I shouldn't do that if I were you," I said, with an eye on the silver-backed brushes I had

acquired at the Universal Stores. "There is nothing to complain of in this house."

"Not much, perhaps, but there is the principle. Still, our servants here are our friends. Blother often spanked me as a child, and Arthur and I played fives together at school. I don't want to make trouble here. I think, considering what we have done to help the rich, nobody can call us disloyal for for standing outside."

"I am sure your father would much prefer it."

"Has he talked about it at all?" Edward asked, a little anxiously. "What are his views of the movement?"

"I think he feels that it is a little too upsetting altogether. He showed no disposition to throw his dinner out of the window this evening."

"That would, perhaps, be too much to expect of him," said Edward. "Twenty years ago I am sure he would have been the first to do it."

"I am not so sure about that," I said. "He seems to have taken his own quiet line from the beginning. He has forced himself rigidly into a life of luxury, and, as far as I have observed, has never flinched from it."

"No," said Edward. "He has led a noble and beautiful life of self-sacrifice, and it sometimes crosses my mind that it has rewarded him by making him happier living as a rich man than as a poor man."

"The same idea has occasionally crossed *my* mind," I said. "I shouldn't drag him in to it, if I were you."

"I think perhaps you are right. I should not like to distract his mind by trying to persuade him to take a leading part in this great fight for freedom. Let him go on in his quiet unselfish way. He has really been fighting for us, and preparing the way for this all his life."

When Edward had told me all that had happened, and a great deal of what he hoped would happen, he became rather pensive.

"Do you know," he said, "I believe this is the last night I may sleep in my own peaceful home, which, for all its drawbacks of wealth and ease, is still very dear to me. It may be weeks, or even years, before I may come back to it."

"Why do you think that?" I asked.

"To-morrow we demonstrate. We march through the streets of Culbut with banners. I shall be at the head of the procession, with others, of course, but at any rate in a prominent position. I shall be a marked man."

Legitimate pride in the thought of this distinction seemed to be struggling in Edward's mind with the melancholy that was fast stealing over him. He paused, and then added with a sigh: "Very likely I shall be arrested."

"Oh, well," I said, "if you put your head in

the lion's mouth you must be prepared for his biting. I wish to goodness you would take it out before it is too late—for the sake of your family, if not for your own."

But Edward would not do that; he said that he must go on with his work, wherever it led him. The only encouragement I could give him was that they would probably treat his as a political offence, for which they would only imprison him in the first division, in which, as he had once assured me, they would give him plenty of manual labour, and feed him chiefly on bread and water.

This cheered him somewhat, and he left me to prepare himself for the morrow.

CHAPTER XXVII

The parade of the newly-formed Masters' and Mistresses' Union duly took place, and was attended by no immediately unpleasant results as far as Edward or the other leaders were concerned.

It was quite an orderly demonstration, and its organisers had been astute enough to disassociate themselves from the anarchical proceedings of Mr. Bolster, and those who had followed his lead. I discovered that Edward had given me an overcoloured account of the importance that these outbreaks had had in the movement, and possibly of his own share in directing it. He carried a banner in the procession, on which had been emblazoned, rather hurriedly, the words: "We Want to Make our own Beds," and marched, surrounded by the mistresses, about half-way down the line. If the police had made any arrests, I doubt if they would have picked him out, or even if they would have noticed him.

All would have gone well if Edward had now been content to work on these safe and constitutional lines. There were stronger heads than his directing affairs, and with such success that they

were able to throw over those who had been responsible for quickening the unrest into life. They even encouraged the police to take active steps against those who had put themselves into a state of siege. The tradespeople were forced to stop their supplies, and they were all starved out within a week. When they got them under lock and key they dealt leniently with them, for public opinion was largely on their side. But Edward was so furious with the cynical way in which his fellow progressives had repudiated these noble-spirited pioneers that there was no holding him, and at last he achieved that crown of martyrdom for which he had thirsted, and was arrested, as he was leaving a meeting of the Super-Assessed Employers' Protest League.

I went to the Court to hear him tried, and met one of the policemen who had come to take my finger-prints. He told me that I had nearly been arrested too, as I had been seen with Edward in Mr. Bolster's garden when he had been persuading people to throw things out of their own windows, in imitation of that hero, but the authorities had refused to prosecute me. Without actually saying so he gave me to understand that Lord Potter was at the bottom of it, but that the case against Edward was so strong that they could not refuse to take it up when once the information had been laid.

Lord Potter pushed his way into the court as we were speaking together, and when he saw me glared with fury, but said nothing, not even when I asked him politely if he would like any more prints of Tom's photographs.

These had turned out well, and created much amusement in the family circle. Unknown to Mr. Perry, who might have objected, a print of each had been sent to Lord Potter, and had probably pleased him less than the rest of us.

Edward stood up in the dock like a man, acknowledged all that was alleged against him, glorified in it, and made a speech to the effect that a day would come.

The magistrate listened to him indulgently, and said he was sorry to see a young man of his character and parentage in such a position. He would not be doing his duty if he overlooked the offence, but on account of Edward's hitherto blameless record, and the purity of his intentions, would sentence him to a month's imprisonment in the first division. He hoped that this very lenient punishment, for an offence that was graver than he seemed to recognise, would encourage him for the future to confine his efforts for the amelioration of the rich to more legitimate channels.

I shook Edward by the hand as he was led away to undergo his punishment, and he told me to tell his family not to grieve for him. Nothing

would daunt his spirit, and, if he survived his punishment, he should come out of prison more determined to carry on his work than when he went in.

Edward's conviction cast a gloom over us at Magnolia Hall. Mr. Perry was particularly cast down by it, and did not seem to be able to take any comfort from the fact that Edward was to be treated as a prisoner of the first class.

"They are sending them to work underground in the coal mines now," he said, "and they feed them chiefly on skilly. These were reforms that were long since overdue, and I have perhaps had more to do with them than anybody. But, even with those alleviations, imprisonment is a terrible thing, and it goes to my heart that a son of mine should be treated in this way, after all I have done. I sometimes wonder whether it has been worth it, and whether I should not have done better for those dear to me if I had kept to the life to which I was born."

Mrs. Perry and Miriam both assured him that he would not, and presently managed to assuage the sharpness of his grief.

"You are one and all of you wonderful supports to a man who has taken up a thankless and difficult task," he said. "When I see you so cheerfully ready to bear your share of the burden, I must not shrink from doing my part. I am

still whole-hearted in my sympathy with the rich. Blother, old friend, bring up a bottle of champagne—two bottles. I must not falter. I cannot go to prison, but I can and will continue to play my part in the great work."

Blother brought the champagne. He was much moved, and put all the trouble down to the malignity of Lord Potter.

"No-one would have taken any notice of Edward's foolish little game if Potter hadn't forced them to," he said. "It is well-known that Edward is a quite harmless crank, and for your sake, Perry, they ought to have left him alone. But don't take on about it. You won't find yourself any the less regarded because of this, and when young Edward comes back to us, we must try to keep him in better order."

Mr. Blother was right in saying that no-one thought the worse of Mr. Perry for the blow that had been dealt him. He received many tokens of sympathy from both public and private sources, and soon came to regard Edward's imprisonment with complete equanimity.

"I think this trial must have been sent to me for my good," he said to me two days later. "I am experiencing a wonderful calm of spirit in spite of it. I shall use the period of my poor Edward's incarceration as a breathing space, and shall give up as many of my activities as possible

for the next month. When he returns to us, I think I shall persuade him to travel for a time, and after that we shall be able to return to our work together with renewed zest."

CHAPTER XXVIII

Two days after Edward's conviction, when we were all getting a little accustomed to his loss, Miriam and I had spent an hour of the afternoon in her garden, laying plans for our now fast-approaching elopement, and had just left it when Mollie came running towards us with the news that Herman and Amelia had come to tea, and wanted to see us both.

I always felt a little uneasy at the thought of Herman Eppstein, and as in two days' time he was to sell my holding in Mount Lebanons, I thought that he might have come to say something to me about them.

I was determined, however, that he should not say it in the drawing-room, if I could possibly help it. Directly we went in, I began to talk about Edward, and about the exciting things that were happening generally, and so infected the rest with my loquacity that they all became loquacious too, and we made an animated party. Mr. Perry was there, which was somewhat unusual, but since Edward's departure he had been about the house a good deal, and seemed to find it restful.

I saw very plainly, though, that Eppstein was dying to bring out some news, and only awaited a lull in the conversation to do so. I was also doubtful whether his wife did not know as much about Mount Lebanons as he did, for her eye was often fixed upon me with a curious expression. She took her full share in the conversation, but I could see that she would make no effort to prolong it if it flagged of its own accord. I tried to make signs to Eppstein, but he either couldn't or wouldn't understand them, and presently I had to resign myself to some ultimate revelation.

Just as I thought, and the Eppsteins must also have thought, that this time had come, there was a diversion. I heard a ring at the front door bell, and heard Blother and Lord Arthur go across the hall to answer it. I exerted myself to give the talk another fillip, until the caller, if there was one, should arrive, and breathed again when the door was flung open and Mr. Blother's sonorous voice announced a name. But when I heard that name my spirit sank again.

The visitor was Mr. Hobson, and he came into the room with a wild and disordered air, which changed to one of menace as, without even greeting Mrs. Perry, he pointed at me and cried: "Deceiver! You are not what you pretend to be!"

Few deceivers are; and my conscience was not

wholly clear. But I was, at any rate, unconscious of having done Mr. Hobson any harm, and asked him, in some surprise, what complaint he had against me.

It was Herman Eppstein who took up the question, and dealt with it with a resource which I should hardly have expected of him.

"I know all about it, Mr. 'Obson," he said, "and you 'aven't nothing to grumble at. Mr. 'Oward took over your shares at market price, and did you a very good turn. If you'd a knowed you could do better by 'anging on to them, why did you let 'em go?"

Mr. Hobson sank into a chair, and buried his face in his hands, rocking his body to and fro.

"I might have known it," he said. "Nothing I ever do goes right. If I had kept those shares, I should have been a poor man once more. And I *should* have kept them, if he hadn't come and pretended to be doing me a good turn."

He lifted up his head, and hissed the word: "Viper!" at me, and then subsided once more into his state of misery.

"What is it all about, Herman? What has happened?" asked Mr. Perry.

I also wanted to know what had happened. I was not feeling at all comfortable, and no longer wished to prevent Eppstein from telling his story.

"Mr. 'Oward took over thirty-five thousand Mount Lebanon shares from Mr. 'Obson. It was all in order, and Mr. 'Obson must 'ave been precious glad to get rid of them. Mr. 'Oward 'olds them now, and I take this opportunity of congratulating him. Still, I do think, as 'e is almost a member of this family as you might say, 'e might 'ave let some of the rest of us into the know, instead of keeping all the good luck to 'imself."

"What has happened?" asked Mr. Perry again.

"Arst 'im. 'E'll tell you," said Eppstein.

"I would rather you did," I said. "You can put it more lucidly."

"Well, they've been rocky for a long time," explained Eppstein, "but they bulled them up, and never let on that they'd come to the end of their lode. But this afternoon the news come that there's been no gold for a long time, and they've been paying interest out of capital. And that ain't all. There's never been more than five shillings a share paid on them. They're calling up another five shillings at the end of a month, and they'll call up the rest at three months intervals, and then they'll wind up. 'Oward, I don't bear no malice—you've got the bulge on all of us this time—and I should like to shake 'ands with you."

I shook hands with him, my brain in a tumult, then with his wife, and finally with Mr. Perry, who had by this time taken in the full meaning of Eppstein's announcement, which was a good deal more than I had.

It was Hobson who brought home to me the appalling reality.

"He came to me," he said, accusingly, "and offered to take twenty or thirty thousand pounds from me as a free gift. He led me up to offering him all my holding in Mount Lebanons. If I had kept them I should have stood to lose over £140,000 now, and should have been entitled to pay up another £26,000 in calls—nearly £170,000 in all. And now *he* has lost all that, and I say it isn't fair. He has swindled me."

There followed an altercation between him and Eppstein and Mr. Perry. Mr. Perry rebuked him for the unfounded accusations he had made against me, and Eppstein told him that *he* was the swindler if he expected to lose it both ways. But still, he kept on repeating his reproaches, and finally I took a bold resolution, and generously offered to let him have his shares back again.

But neither Eppstein nor Mr. Perry would hear of this, and I was not in a position to press it. After all, Hobson had already lost the full value of his shares, and could only stand to gain by the amount he would have had to pay up on the calls.

When this was pointed out to him, he acknowledged that he had never been much of a business-man, apologised to me for his behaviour, and went away somewhat conforted, leaving me to the congratulations of the family.

I accepted them, I hope, modestly. I was almost paralysed by the blow. Instead of being able to leave Upsidonia with a comfortable fortune, I should leave it under an appalling burden of debt. I had lost a hundred and seventy thousand pounds, and could only comfort myself with the resolution never again as long as I lived to put my finger in the Stock Exchange pie. But it was cold comfort enough, and I broke away as soon as I could from the delight of Mr. Perry, who now saw in me a most eligible son-in-law, and from the ill-concealed jealousy of Mrs. Eppstein. I took Eppstein into the library with me on the plea of business. I wanted time to think before I had another talk with Miriam, who, I could see, had been deeply puzzled by the foregoing conversation, and whose due it was to have all the explanation I could offer.

CHAPTER XXIX

"My dear," I said, when Miriam and I had once more sought the seclusion of her garden, and she had asked me what it all meant, "you don't understand English ways yet. It is not to be expected that you should, with your upbringing. But it is absolutely necessary to have *some* money in England, when you marry, and I thought I would do Hobson a good turn by getting what I wanted from him. It is most unfortunate that it has turned out as it has."

But she could not bring herself to this view. "I am sure that however you may try to hide it," she said, "you really only did it because you were sorry for the poor Hobsons. I love and honour you for it, and I am glad you have been rewarded as you have, though I do hope you won't do it again, because now you have *me* to think of, you know, and, after all, it is very risky."

"Miriam," I said, "I am not going to sail under false colours with you. I wanted Hobson's money, and I don't know what on earth to do now I haven't got it."

"Why, do just what we had arranged to do,"

she said. "I am ready to come with you, and if it means that we shan't have to live in the rich way we have talked about, I shall be all the better pleased. It has always been rather a weight on my spirits, and I am very relieved to think that we shall be poor after all."

"My dearest of girls, I am afraid you won't like being poor in England."

"I should like it anywhere. And I believe you have only been making up all that you have told me, so as to test me.'

"Test you? What do you mean?"

She took my arm, and laid her fair head on my shoulder. "I think you must have been a little doubtful about me," she said, "always seeing me in these unnatural surroundings. You must have thought that I couldn't be brought up in a place like this all my life without being affected by it. You wanted to see how much I cared for luxury for its own sake. Truly, John, I don't want it at all. I only want you."

What was I to say to this touching confession?

What I did say caused her to continue: "The picture you drew of liking to have things for the sake of having them was rather like a nightmare to me. Think of a life in which one could never belong to one's self, or to one another, because one was always bowed down by the weight of possessions! And as we got older they

would accumulate more and more, until we became stifled by them. Why, one might even come to take no pleasure in any beautiful things that didn't belong to one. One might even envy other people what they had. Why should anybody *want* to burden themselves in that way?"

"Well, of course," I said, "one *can* do all right without a lot of things around one."

"Oh, yes; one would be so much happier. Beatrice Coghill, a friend of mine, married about a year ago, and they took a little farm in the country. I went to stay with them there. It was just large enough for them to do all the work themselves. They live in the open air all day long, and work hard, and never have a care in the world. She makes her little home so sweet for her husband, and she told me she was always thinking about it, and about him when he is out working in the fields. In the evenings they read, and she plays to him. They don't mind the long winters because they are always together, and do what they like doing indoors. And in the summer they have their garden, and their walks about the quiet fields. Sometimes they take a little holiday, and come into Culbut to see their friends, and to hear some music, but they are always glad to get back to their happy little home. They never have any of the annoyances that we go through here every day of our lives, and they can

look forward to growing old together, and keeping all their simple happiness to the end."

"My darling," I said. "That is a very pretty picture."

And, indeed, it seemed to me, as painted by Miriam, the prettiest sort of picture. If I could make her happy, and myself happy with her, by living a life of bodily toil in the open air, which is the best sort of toil, and feeding the demands of the brain in the hours that seem set apart by nature for such pursuits, then a little farm, by all means.

But a farm in England, however little, wants money to buy, money to stock, and not infrequently money to carry on. It was only in Upsidonia that one could acquire it, stock it, work it without any previous experience, and live off it without any anxiety, as well as contribute three hundred pounds a year towards the income of somebody else, with no capital behind one. No English Parliament Act that I am aware of holds out any such prospects to the small holder. It did cross my mind that it might be worth while considering whether it would not be better to give up all idea of leaving Upsidonia now or at any time. One could live more comfortably in that country owing a hundred and seventy thousand pounds than in any other that I know of. But I was already getting a little tired of Up-

sidonia, and was looking forward keenly to taking Miriam away with me. Besides, there was always that question of the newspaper placard—"Who is Mr. John Howard?"—hanging over me. If I stayed in Upsidonia, that would have to be answered sooner or later, and for all I knew might be ripe for an answer at that very moment. No; curiosity about me seemed to have died down for the time, but I was not in the safest of positions; and the sooner I got out of the country, with Miriam, the better.

"We can't very well live on a farm in England," I said. "There are many reasons against it. But would you be content to live with me in the simplest possible kind of way, while I worked for you in the way I have learnt? I *could* just manage it, and *I* don't want anything more than a tiny little house, with you in it, if *you* don't."

She said that she didn't—that she loved the idea of being poor with me, and that if I had really been used to living in luxury, although this she could hardly believe, then she would show me how little luxury made for happiness. She removed all my unworthy fears, and made me quite ashamed of having had designs on Upsidonian pockets. I would leave the country not a penny richer than when I came into it, except for the few items I have already mentioned. I felt much more comfortable in mind when I had taken this decision,

and if along with it there went the prospect of also freeing myself from the immense load of debt I had contracted, by leaving it behind me, I can hardly be blamed for that under prevailing conditions.

Miriam and I left her garden that evening in the most complete accord with one another, both rather excited by our fast-approaching departure, but both convinced that we should lead a life of such happiness together as had never yet fallen to the lot of a married couple.

CHAPTER XXX

On the last evening but one, before Miriam and I were to go away together, we were sitting round the tea-table in the verandah. Mrs. Eppstein was with us, and Mr. Perry had said that he would be home at five o'clock, but had not yet appeared. But we heard the wheels of the carriage just as Mr. Blother had brought out the kettle, with the intimation that we had better begin now; and Mr. Perry came out to us directly, still wearing his tall hat, which Lord Arthur usually relieved him of in the hall.

It was evident that he had news for us, and to judge by his face, on which sat an expression combined of jubilance and modesty, it was good news.

"Blother, old friend," said Mr. Perry, "don't go. I have something to tell you."

Then he went up to Mrs. Perry, took her hand in his, kissed it, and said: "Good evening, my lady."

Mrs. Perry exclaimed at this form of address, and after a short pause, during which Mr. Perry removed his hat and looked rather sheepish, Mr. Blother said joyfully: "Ah, I see. At last they

have recognised your value, and have knighted you. Three cheers for Sir Samuel and Lady Perry!"

Mr. Perry held up his hand, and the cheers died on our lips. "You are on the right track, Blother," he said, "but you have not gone far enough. You should have said: 'Three cheers for Lord and Lady Magnolia!' which is the title I have decided to adopt, subject to her ladyship's approval. My dear, a great and unexpected honour has been conferred on me. They have offered me a peerage, contingent on my accepting or refusing it at once. I have accepted, thinking you would wish it for the sake of the children, and my patent was handed to me this afternoon."

We all congratulated the new peer heartily, concealing our surprise at the honour having been conferred on him, and saying that it was only what ought to have been done long ago.

When Mr. Blother had left us to carry the news into the servants' quarters, Mr. Perry, or rather Lord Magnolia, told us all about it.

"It is the reward of my lifelong service in the cause of the downtrodden," he said, "and dear Edward will be gratified to know that the punishment so harshly inflicted upon him has had something to do with it. I was given to understand that the Government much regrets the necessity of having had to prosecute him, and, as a good

deal of feeling has been aroused against them in consequence of that action, they hoped that this honour, conferred upon me so promptly, might remove some of that feeling, as showing that, whatever may be thought of them, they are really on our side. Therefore, in one way, I may be said to be doing as much for them as they are doing for me, which made it, perhaps, easier to accept the unlooked for honour. I did not do so without some demur. I said that I should not consent to be a mere puppet peer,* and they assured me that nothing of the sort was intended. They also assured me in the handsomest way that the offer of a peerage to me had long been under consideration, and the only difficulty about it had been that my way of living might bring ridicule on the nobility generally. I told them at once that my work was far too dear to me to be given up, and that if the stipulation was that I should leave my friends amongst the rich, and go back to live amongst the poor, I could not consent to it. They said that no such stipulation would be made, and that removed my last objection."

What his other objections had been, Lord Magnolia did not tell us. It was obvious that he had not had the least idea of such an honour ever being conferred on him, and was quite agreeably stirred by it.

* See Note.

"I only wish that dear Edward were here to share our gratification," he said, "but it will not be long now before we have him with us again. My dear, I think you might write him a note to tell him what has happened. Tomorrow will be his day for receiving letters, and do not forget to address him as the Honourable Edward Perry."

"I must go home at once and tell Herman," said Mrs. Eppstein. "It was a step up for him to marry me, but he little thought that he would be marrying into the peerage."

"Shall I be Lady Mollie, like Susan and Cynthia?" enquired Lord Magnolia's younger daughter.

"You will be the Honourable Mollie, my love," replied that nobleman. "You are all now the Honourable. But you must not think too much of that. These distinctions are nothing in themselves, and you must not forget that it is worth that counts, and that titles are usually given as a reward to those who are the last to desire them for themselves. It is so in this case. Nothing will be changed here, and we shall still go on in our quiet way, trying to live for our fellow-creatures, continuing to share in their joys and in their sorrows, and living like the richest and humblest of them."

At this moment, all the household, led by Mr. Blother and Mrs. Lemon, came filing out on to

the verandah, to congratulate their master on the honour that had been conferred upon him.

Lord Magnolia received their felicitations with heartfelt gratitude, and then Mr. Blother made a little speech.

"It is quite a new situation," he said, "for a domestic staff to find themselves in the service of a peer of the realm, and it is a matter of congratulation to one and all of us that the already unusual circumstances under which we have all lived together here—some of us for a number of years—have been so happy that no awkwardness has been felt anywhere. Perhaps we, in the servants' hall, can take some of the credit for that, for I think we can all say that we have borne some of the burdens of wealth, and have not let them fall entirely upon the shoulders of the excellent master and mistress with whom we have lived in such friendly relations. If any of us have ever seemed to press too hardly upon the younger members of the family, it has only been because we did not wish them to succumb to the temptations of wealth, as they might have done if they had been allowed to forget that servants are usually in a far superior position to those whom they serve. For it would never do for them to grow up thinking that life amongst the rich was so pleasant as I think we servants may pride ourselves on having made it at Magnolia Hall.

"However, I need say no more about that. What I *am* going to say, on behalf of myself and all my colleagues, is that we wish to mark this happy occasion by an act of self-sacrifice. However my old friend, Lord Magnolia, may wish to conduct his life in the future, we feel that for this evening, at least, we should not like to see him and her ladyship occupying an inferior situation to our own. We propose that the household staff should take their places at the dinner-table, and be waited upon by Lord Magnolia and his family, who will also cook the dinner, and wash-up afterwards."

It would be impossible to describe the emotion with which Lord Magnolia met this touching offer of self-surrender, so handsomely acquiesced in by the whole company before him. He said a great many things in reply, but what he said most insistently, and repeated so that it could not possibly be misunderstood, was that nothing would induce him to accept it. Nothing was to be changed, he said. It would take away all his gratification in the honour that had been done to him, if it was to be thought that it would for a moment put him on the level of those whom he had always been glad to call his friends. Let them keep their proud position, and let those who thought and acted with him keep their humble one. If they would do him that honour, let them

all come in after dinner and drink a glass of wine—such of them as were not teetotallers—with him and his family. More than that he could not accept from them, if they begged him on their bended knees,

So it was settled. Lord Magnolia drank several glasses of wine that evening, and went up to bed in as happy a frame of mind as that of any peer in Upsidonia.

CHAPTER XXXI

My last day in Upsidonia had arrived, and the time was fast approaching when I was about to rob that country of its brightest jewel. Towards the evening, feeling restless, I set out for a walk. Miriam was with her mother, and as there was no-one else whose company I desired at that time I went alone.

I thought I might as well see exactly how long it would take to walk to the other side of Culbut so as to run no risk of meeting many people when I should take the same road with Miriam, very early the next morning.

When I got into the busier part of Culbut, I bought an evening paper, and running my eye idly over its columns, came upon one headed: "The Truth about John Howard at Last. Arrest Shortly Expected. New Peer Victimised."

I took refuge upon the top of a tram-car, and read the column through. It stated that the Master of McGillicuddy, the son of the respected Highland Baron of that ilk, had been brought to the office of the paper by another highly-respected nobleman—in whom I had no difficulty in recognising Lord Potter—and had authorised

them to announce, for the protection of all honest people, that there was a dangerous criminal in their midst, whom they would do well to beware of.

A prisoner undergoing a term of penal servitude for representing himself as a professor of dead languages, and practising a long series of cruel frauds on young students, many of whom had lost places in the monthly examinations owing to his empirical methods of tuition, had escaped from gaol some weeks before. He was known to have gone south, no doubt with the idea of practising the same frauds on the less sophisticated scholars of Upsidonia. There was no doubt whatever that the person already arrested on his arrival in Culbut for a gross insult to a highly-respected personage, was this escaped prisoner, masquerading under another name. The police, who had hitherto failed to trace the escaped convict, had been notified, and, by the time these words were in print, would no doubt have got him once more safely under lock and key.

Unless the paper was mistaken in this last statement, I had probably passed the police on my way into Culbut, and they were now at Magnolia Hall awaiting my return. According to the descriptions given by the Master of McGillicuddy of the escaped prisoner, he might have been my twin brother dressed up in my own clothes.

I need not reproduce the scorn with which the journal, which was that chiefly read by the members of the dirty set, expressed itself about the newly-created peer, who had been taken in by this unscrupulous criminal, and had even allowed him to become engaged to his daughter. It pained me greatly, and would certainly pain Lord Magnolia no less when he should come to read it.

The blow was a stunning one. If there was such a criminal at large as had been described by the Master of McGillicuddy, which I had no reason to doubt, it would be very difficult to persuade the police that I was not that criminal. Indeed, how could I expect to persuade them of anything? I could give no account of myself that would satisfy them that they were arresting an innocent person, and even if the Highland police eventually disclaimed me, I knew it would take some time to get them to Culbut, and in the meantime I should certainly be kept in custody. It was quite certain that the moment I returned to Magnolia Hall I should be arrested, even if I got so far, and at dawn the next morning, when Miriam and I ought to have been starting on the happiest of journeys together, I should be most comfortably housed in prison.

The more I thought of it, the more angry I became at this most unkind stroke of fate, and the more angry with the preposterous Lord Potter,

who had undoubtedly brought it upon me. I could not get at Miriam to tell her to start alone and join me somewhere on the road. I could do nothing. I was robbed of all I had hoped for as it seemed just within my grasp.

I walked on and on, trying to form some plan. I walked right through Culbut, with my eyes mostly on the ground.

By and by, something caused me to lift them, and I found myself passing a little wood, which, with a start of surprise, I recognised as the one from which I had made my first entry into Culbut.

It was, as Edward had said, and as was now quite plain to me, part of the grounds of a large institution, and looked, from this side, quite unlike what I had taken it to be when I had entered it from the other.

Still, in spite of Edward's description of the kind of country that lay beyond, I had certainly entered this wood from the cave, in the way I have described, and I had not the smallest doubt but what I could return by the same way.

I thought that I might as well satisfy myself of the exact whereabouts of the cave, so that I should be able to lead Miriam directly to it, if I should succeed in getting her away. The only plan that seemed to me possible was to keep away from Magnolia Hall until nightfall, and then try in some way to communicate with her, and boldly

carry her off under cover of darkness. Very likely the house would be watched, and we might be followed, even if we escaped. I did not want to run any risk by groping about in the wood, when possibly time would be of value.

I found the trees and the bushes without the least difficulty, just as I remembered them, and pushed through them to the dark aperture of the cave.

I went in a short distance, not meaning to go very far, but just to satisfy myself that the way was clear.

I am sure that I had not penetrated more than fifty yards, for the light still held faintly, when suddenly the same roar was in my ears as had frightened the man who had entered the cave with me from the other end. I was aware of something odd in my head, which may have been a heavy blow, although it did not feel like one.

Then I lost consciousness completely.

I came to, to find myself lying in bed, in a little room lit by a lattice window, through which was a view of rolling purple moor. I felt very weak, and when I tried to move, found that my body was heavily bandaged and my head swathed. The movement caused a sharp pain to shoot through me, and again I lost consciousness.

This was nearly six weeks ago. I am now sitting in a little slip of a garden behind the inn, with the moor coming right up to it. I cannot walk yet, for both my legs were broken by the subsidence of the cave, as well as a few other comparatively unimportant bones in my body. But my head has been clear for a long time, and I have employed my enforced leisure in writing this account of what befell me.

I cannot, even now, make out exactly what happened. The kind folk who rescued me, and have looked after me ever since, stoutly aver that the fall of earth happened on this side of the cave, almost directly I and my companion entered it; that he gave the alarm immediately, and I was extricated within an hour.

If this is true, what becomes of Upsidonia?

It cannot be true. But I no longer talk of Upsidonia to them, for when I did so, after I began to mend, they looked askance at me and were obviously hiding something. Even the doctor, who rides over the moors from Eppington on a shaggy pony, told me that I should not get well as long as I clung to such delusions.

Delusions! Is Miriam a delusion, I should like to know? Can a man fall in love with a delusion?

No. These people must know perfectly well of the existence of Upsidonia, but for some reason

of their own they wish to keep it dark. Perhaps I shall know why when I get well again.

But I don't much care what their reasons are. The cave is blocked up now, but from where I sit I can see a tall rampart of rock about a mile to the north across the moor. It looks inaccessible, but there must be some way over it, or round it. When I can walk again I shall find a way. For beyond it lies Upsidonia, and Upsidonia contains Miriam.

Wherever Miriam is, I am going to find her.

THE END.

NOTES

P. 45.—A Daylight Saving Bill had been passed some years before, by which an hour was borrowed in April to be paid back in October. The necessity, however, of getting up an hour earlier than usual had made the whole populace so cross that the Government which had passed the Bill was forced to resign, and the next Government repealed the law immediately upon coming into office. They omitted, however, to allow for the repayment of the borrowed hour, and as no Government had since cared to touch the question, Upsidonian time had remained an hour earlier ever since.

P. 45.—It was held in Upsidonia that private knowledge of any fact was the possessor's own property, and, as no one was willing to acquire property if they could help it, questions of this sort were never pressed. It had even been laid down in the courts that a person too ready with information could be indicted for forcing property on his hearers. Vide Cope on " The Bore in Law."

P. 46.—I might also have been arrested for sleeping out with visible means of subsistence, which had been in Mr. Perry's mind when he had imperilled himself by his kindly action, as he told me afterwards.

P. 55.—They did not forget to send in their bill, but I forgot to pay it.

P. 62.—The public schools, of which there were a good number in Upsidonia, were attended exclusively by the rich, as were the two older universities. Luxurious habits were encouraged in these establishments, and learning was at a discount, although this was never acknowledged. The poor attended council schools, and the newer universities. But even from a school like Seton, where the sons of the worst families were educated, there was a ladder to the more serious seats of learning, and many rich scholars had raised themselves by their own efforts to a position from which they could look down on the families from which they had sprung.

P. 63.—There were two schools of economic reformers in Upsidonia. The one which was supported by the Perrys wished to limit production by law, but I am inclined to think that Mr. Perry did not wish it very much. Edward, however, was strongly in favour of legislation. He thought that the many would benefit at the expense of the few, or so he said.

The other school believed in freedom of consumption, or rather of non-consumption. I never met any of its adherents while in Upsidonia, and only heard them called names.

P. 64.—There was said to be a good deal of corruption in this service. The Government auditors were too well paid to make them altogether trustworthy. Edward was going to see that this was altered when he had time.

P. 65.—This was well said on my part, and I do not regard Edward's reply as convincing.

P. 67.—Buff with canary facings.

P. 71.—Upsidonian word of unknown derivation, signifying a degraded being ; one who had lost caste.

P. 73.—I learnt afterwards that it was a matter of "form," and that those amongst Tom's schoolfellows who betrayed a liking for good things were designated "Guts."

P. 75.—A Bill was then before Parliament which would have burdened brewers in perpetuity with the licences of the public-houses owned by them. Mr. Perry regarded this proposal as an intolerable oppression of a deserving body of men. The Bill was afterwards amended, and the brewers relieved of a great anxiety.

P. 76.—I had already taken a fancy to her. See page 51.

P. 80.—The Highlanders were much looked up to by dwellers in other parts of Upsidonia. They were a thrifty hard-living race of fine physique, who had kept very much to themselves, owing largely to the inaccessibility of the country they inhabited ; they seldom visited any other part of Upsidonia, or welcomed visitors to their own. They had no rich among them, and seemed to have solved all the economic problems that were so disturbing in and around Culbut, for instance. There were no towns in the Highlands ; everybody lived on the land, and as the soil was very poor they had a hard struggle for existence, which brought out the best that was in them. Luxury was absolutely unknown amongst them, but learning flourished. Living so far north, they had long dark winters, which they spent in close study. Their chief form of relaxation was the holding of competitive examinations, for which they all entered. Those who came out first were examiners next time.

P. 90.—He said that he didn't like playing with girls.

P. 91.—It was a plantain.

P. 93.—The contempt for pretty clothes amongst the girl children of Culbut was a question of form. Cf. note on Tom, page 55.

P. 94.—The Lady Cynthia Maxted, younger daughter of the Earl of Blueberry by his marriage with Sarah, daughter of Giles Ploughshare, Esq.

P. 95.—The public parks of Culbut, as well as the semi-private ones (see chapter xiv), were entirely closed to the rich. This had not always been so, but an agitation had been made by the mothers of the poor children who played there some years before, and the Municipality had legislated in their favour. Edward Perry considered this a very bad business.

P. 109.—When I discussed this with Edward, he asked indignantly why those in the liquor trade should be assisted in this way, when other traders in a like predicament would get no help from the Government, but would have to put up prices. I could give him no answer.

P. 111.—The club to which Mr. Perry had introduced me would have corresponded to a working man's club with us, and was under some sort of clerical control. Its members set this, along with the annual subscription, as against advantages enjoyed.

P. 113.—Upsidonian expression for getting rid of your money.

P. 114.—The clergy in Upsidonia were accustomed to treat the rich in a slightly different manner from that in which they treated the poor.

P. 118.—They possessed all the Greek and Latin Classics in Upsidonia, but had not learnt to treat them as living

languages. Their greatest scholars had decided that although they were made up of words, or what looked like words, they had not, and never had had, any consecutive meaning. At one time a school had arisen which held them to be mathematical symbols, and a certain Professor Pottinger had claimed to have proved that they referred to the movements of the heavenly bodies. He had predicted, out of Propertius, the arrival of a hitherto unknown comet, but the comet had failed to make its appearance, and the influence of his school had dwindled.

Another advanced school, led by a Professor of a Highland University, taught that the words did have an actual meaning. By picking out all those that are known to-day, such as "omnibus," "miles," "tandem," "ἥκιστα," and the like, and rearranging them, this school professed to have translated a good deal. But as each student rearranged them differently, the results were not altogether satisfactory, even to themselves.

I was told of a don in the University of Culbut who had been struck with the number of words which did not seem to correspond with any pronunciation, however corrupt, with which Upsidonians were acquainted; and who even went so far as to say that classical words that were not known might not be those words themselves, but symbolical, as it were, of quite different words. The word "hoc," for instance, he did not believe to be a mis-spelling of the wine of that name, or even to stand for "hook," as some scholars maintained. And there had always been a dispute as to whether the word "et," which occurred so frequently in both languages, should be read as "ate," or as "Et," with a capital, short for "Etta," or "Henrietta." This man boldly proclaimed that it was neither, but from the frequency of its occurrence, was probably intended to represent

the word "and." He was, however, unable to explain why people who wished to write "and" should prefer to write "et"; and although his views had aroused some interest in learned circles, he was commonly regarded as a crank.

The great mass of Upsidonian classical scholars were content to employ themselves usefully in examining the different collocations of words in various authors, and in the schools a great deal was learnt by heart. The classics were considered a most valuable exercise of the faculties, and the conservative teachers and men of learning held that it would be a thousand pities to drop them, simply because they did not help the learner to lose money.

P. 122.—This was a favourite subject of conversation with ladies in Upsidonia.

P. 132.—She was also an extremely nice woman—the widow of a well-known musician, and herself no mean performer, on the harp.

P. 133.—The same sort of thing holds amongst us, in matters of art, for instance. Perhaps the majority of us prefer chatty pictures with a strong love interest to the works of Holbein and Rembrandt; but we should not make the same fuss if there were a danger of their being taken out of the country.

P. 138.—This park was one of the most beautiful of the many in Culbut, and of something like twenty acres in extent. It was not really a public park, although it was called so, and was kept up with public money. It was used exclusively by the inhabitants of the houses abutting on to it; the Ladies Susan and Cynthia might play all over it without any risk of infection, mental or physical, from rich children; and if Lord and Lady Blueberry took a walk there in the cool

of the evening they would meet none but those whom it might be agreeable to them to meet.

P. 140.—Genuine aristocrats, like the Blueberrys and the Rumboroughs, never hesitated to acquire such possessions as seemed necessary for a well-balanced life, or for legitimate pleasure. In the matter of music, all poor children were taught some instrument at first, but only those who showed considerable aptitude for it were allowed to go beyond a certain point. And they were never allowed to practise at home, even where there was a piano. But on reaching the age of fourteen, if they could pass a rather stiff examination, their parents submitted to the annoyance of acquiring another piece of property, such as a piano, or a violin, for the sake of the pleasure they could gain from their children's performance.

As a consequence of these wise provisions, there were no girls to be found in Upsidonian homes, at least among the poor, who, as the result of a long and expensive education, could play one piece and three hymn tunes indifferently, and did so whenever they felt inclined.

P. 156.—Even in the case of a marriage between families living respectively in town and country the separation was more complete than with us. There were few railways in Upsidonia, and even motor-cars were looked upon with suspicion, and only used by the rich. The poor preferred to drive, or still more to walk. But as the population of Upsidonia was divided between those who liked to live in the country and those who liked to live in towns, there was not so much going and coming as with us.

P. 162.—Sandpit's Gang was a very smart one. Its members could shift more stuff in an hour than ordinary

gangs in two. It was one of the sights of the town to see them running to and fro with heavily loaded barrows, over a plank so narrow that it seemed as if they *must* fall off and hurt themselves.

P. 205.—It would not have been etiquette for them to show any interest whatever in the doings of their masters and mistresses, or to unbend in any way while on duty. The second coachman whom we had just heard about was behaving unprofessionally in talking to his own friends from the box, although his fellow-servants would not blame him for inconveniencing his master and mistress by so doing.

P. 265.—In one sense, all the members of the Upsidonian Upper House were puppet peers. Their chamber was the oldest building in Culbut, and one of which the inhabitants of that city were justly proud. But it lacked accommodation. It had been built at a time when there were only twelve peers in the whole of Upsidonia, and as it had been reckoned that never more than half of them would be present at a debate, it had been designed to hold only six people.

But, according to the system on which the Upper House worked, this was ample. All the business was done by five peers—the Lord Chancellor, and two representing each party. As there were no facilities for reporting debates, they held none. In fact, speeches had reduced themselves in the course of years to three formulæ. These were : (1) " Let it go ; " (2) " I think not ; " and (3) " Try again."

Two peers made a quorum, and as a matter of convenience business was usually left to the Lord Chancellor and one peer, who represented the Government when one side was in office, and the Opposition when the other side was in office.

But it must not be supposed that this ancient House had been denuded of all its powers. Far from it. Parliamen-

tary business was much less contentious than with us, and this simple procedure was found to suffice for the bills of most sessions. It worked perhaps better for one party than the other, but as most of the peers belonged to the larger party it was considered only fair that it should do so.

But when a really controversial measure was sent up to the House of Lords, there was a very different state of affairs. Then all the peers in the country were entitled to vote, and the full Committee sat for a week, while the papers were coming in.

It was usually a struggle between the " Let it go's," and the " I think nots " ; but the " Try agains " were sometimes in the majority, and the Bill was sent down to the Lower House for amendment. The peers had no machinery for amending it themselves, and no direct means of indicating the amendments they wished made. With the common-sense that was a feature of so many Upsidonian institutions, it was taken for granted that the House of Commons would know perfectly well what was expected of them, and would put it into their Bill if they wanted it passed when it was sent up a second time.

The great body of peers—men for the most part who had other things to think of—seldom made any objection to announcing which way they intended to vote. If they didn't, they were liable to be constantly worried by people coming to them to find out, when they wanted to get on with their work.

If the Government was particularly annoyed at the rejection of a Bill, they would send it up again, and, to avoid any further fuss, the peers would usually fall back upon a fourth formula, which provided for this contingency. This was : " Settle it for yourselves " ; and it meant that the Bill would go to the House of Lords Committee again in the usual way, and would be passed.

The system worked well on the whole, and it had never happened that a Bill had gone more than three times to the whole body of peers. They always broke down on the third canvass, even if it was on a question that affected themselves adversely. They could not stand the nuisance of being continually interrupted and annoyed ; and many of them turned against their own party for the sake of getting it all over, and being allowed to settle down quietly again.

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